

THE INDYPENDENT

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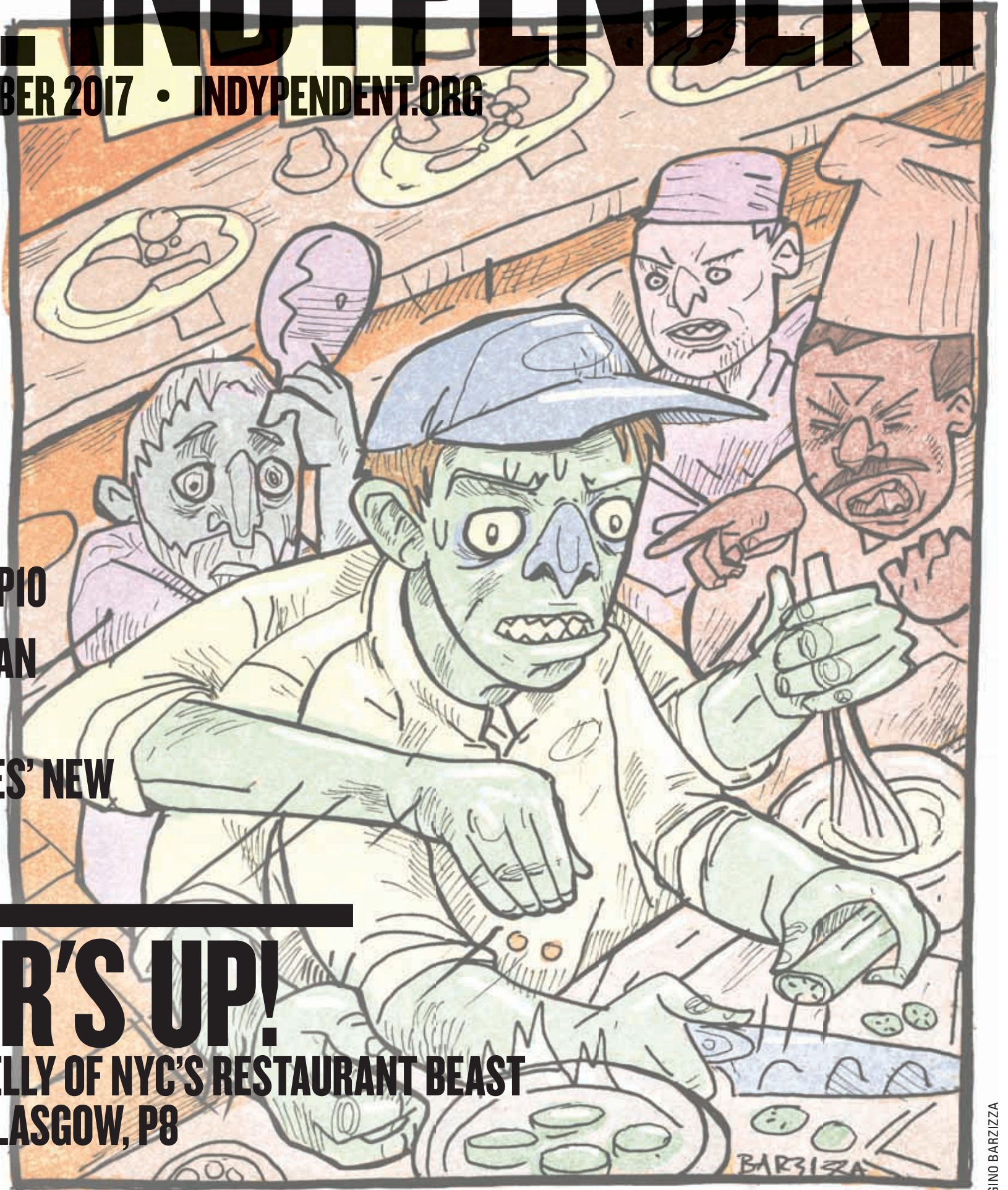
**THE #METOO
REVOLUTION, P10**

**A PUERTO RICAN
JOURNEY, P12**

**MAVIS STAPLES' NEW
ALBUM, P17**

ORDER'S UP!

**LIFE IN THE BELLY OF NYC'S RESTAURANT BEAST
BY GORDON GLASGOW, P8**



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Dec 3rd



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and Carol Smith.



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

NOV

SUN NOV 19
12PM–6PM • \$2 suggested
donation
LIT: ZINE LAUNCH
Got a Girl Crush — a blog and
annual print magazine about
women, by women, for everyone
— is teaming up with Brooklyn's
New Women Space to feature an
emerging line-up of female, fem-
identifying, non-binary, transgen-
der and gender non-conforming
printmakers and their zines.
New Women Space
188 Woodpoint Rd., Bklyn

WED NOV 22
6:45PM–8:15PM • \$12
**SCREENING: DAVID LYNCH: THE
ART LIFE**
The Art Life examines Lynch's art,
music and early films, shining a
light into the dark corners of his
unique world and giving audi-
ences a better understanding of
the man and the artist. Viewers
are given a private view from
Lynch's compound and painting
studio in the hills high above Hol-
lywood, as Lynch retells personal
stories from his past that unfold
like scenes from his films.
Videology Bar & Cinema
308 Bedford Ave., Bklyn

SAT NOV 25
4PM–9PM • \$10–\$50, 21+
**PARTY: AFROCODE NEW YORK
CITY: HIP HOP MEETS AFRO-
BEATS**
A crossover of genres, a fusion
of cultures. Non-stop music,
dancing and positive vibes. Dress
code: fashionable, all black.
Tickets are \$10 in advance at
eventbrite.com.

Hudson Terrace
621 W. 46th St.

SUN NOV 26–SUN DEC 17
2:30PM • \$15
**PERFORMANCE: REVEREND
BILLY AND THE STOPSHOPPING
CHOIR**
Feeling worn down by Year One
of the orange-haired nightmare?
Reverend Billy and the Church
of Stop Shopping Choir will be
preaching and singing and rais-
ing a righteous ruckus for four
straight Sundays. It's the perfect
tonic for the weary activist soul.
Joe's Pub
425 Lafayette St.

MON NOV 27
12PM • FREE
**WORKSHOP: HOUSING COURT
101: THE MORE YOU KNOW!**
Housing experts from SOS Bronx
and the Legal Aid Society will
lead a workshop on housing court
issues and will answer questions
and concerns.
601 E. 163rd St., Bronx

WED NOV 29
8PM • \$10–\$12, 21+
MUSIC: HABIBI
Drawing comparisons to iconic
figures from the Smashing Pump-
kins to the Supremes, Habibi have
proven capable of crafting music
that is both uniquely their own
yet able to traverse borders in its
overarching appeal.
Baby's All Right
146 Broadway, Bklyn

THU NOV 30
6:30PM–8:30PM • \$15
ART: LOVE IT OR HATE IT: PUB-

LIC ART AND CONTROVERSY
Join leading scholars and artists,
including painter and sculptor
Audrey Flack, for an examination
of how art in public spaces can
serve as a flash point for larger
social debates. This talk is part
of the ongoing exhibit, "Art in the
Open: Fifty Years of Public Art in
New York City." Tickets available
at mcny.org.
Museum of the City of New York
1220 Fifth Ave.

THU NOV 30
6:30PM–8PM • FREE
**TALK: WE OWN IT: WORKER
COOPERATIVE STORIES AND
TRENDS IN THE FIELD**
This English/Spanish presenta-
tion from the Democracy at Work
Institute and U.S. Federation
of Worker Cooperatives will
outline how worker cooperatives
increase stability and economic
security for marginalized com-
munities and highlight current
efforts to build coop power and
influence policy. Dinner provided.
The Brooklyn Commons
388 Atlantic Ave.

FRI DEC 1
8PM • \$20 suggested donation
PARTY: REDS NEED GREEN
Socialize with socialists at the
New York City Democratic Social-
ists annual holiday fundraiser.
Musical performances by Sound
of Ceres, DJ Erika Spring (Au
Revoir Simone) and The Six Six
Sick Girls.
China Chalet
47 Broadway

FRI DEC 1
9PM–12AM • \$25, 21+
PARTY: ART AFTER DARK
Join the Guggenheim Mu-
seum for an after-hours evening
featuring a DJ performance by
SHYBOI (KUNQ/Discwoman)
and a private viewing of current
exhibitions, including "Art and
China after 1989: Theater of the
World" and "Josef Albers in
Mexico." Cash bar serves wine
and beer. Guests will be asked
for a photo ID. Tickets available
at ny.guggenheim.org. No tickets
sold at the door.
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum
1071 5th Ave.

SAT DEC 2
8PM • \$5, 21+
**MUSIC: CONCERT FOR PUERTO
RICO**
Performers include the Super-
tones, the Patsy Carroll Band,
Simon Chardiet, and Alix & the
Mechanics. All proceeds go to
Resilient Power Puerto Rico,
which is bringing solar generators
to communities hit hardest by
Hurricane Maria.
Rockaway Brewing Co.
4-15 Beach 72nd St., Queens

SUN DEC 3
4PM–5PM • FREE
**PERFORMANCE: FLAMENCO IN
THE BOROS**
Flamenco Vivo Carlota Santana
kicks off its annual Flamenco in
the Boros tour. Through music,
carols and dance, Navidad Fla-
menca highlights the rich holiday
customs of the Spanish-speaking
world from Argentina and Mexico
to Colombia, Cuba and Puerto

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THE INDYPENDENT

EMBER/DECEMBER

DONNA SINGER

Rico and reflects the influences of Spanish culture throughout the Americas.

*Bronx Music Heritage Center
1303 Louis Nine Blvd., Bronx*

SUN DEC 3

7:30PM • \$8

THEATER: *LETTERS IN THE DIRT*

An immersive, participatory journey through the memories of the late Aiyana Jones, shot and killed in 2010 by an officer during a botched police raid in Detroit on the wrong home. The piece strives to honor her, combining ritual, games, poetry, music and group collaboration to explore all the ways black folks create beginnings.

603 Bushwick Ave., Bklyn

THU DEC 7

6PM–9PM • FREE

MUSIC: PATRICK BRENNAN'S TRANSPARENCY KESTRA

Composer and saxophonist Patrick Brennan has pursued a contrarian and independent musical path for over three decades in search of those yet unheard somethings just around the corner. Transparency Kestra is a rotating community of musicians, a polyrhythmic drum ensemble and an engine of multidirectional musical exploration.

*El Taller Latino Americano
215 E 99th St.*

FRI DEC 8

7PM–9PM • FREE

BOOK LAUNCH: *PLAYING WITH DYNAMITE*

Sharon Harrigan's father was larger than life, a brilliant, but troubled man who blew off his hand with dynamite before she was born and died in a mysterious accident when she was seven. Harrigan's new memoir is about a daughter who goes looking for her father but finds her mother instead. It's about the slipperiness of memory, the necessity of grief and what it means to go home again.

*Bluestockings
172 Allen St., Bklyn*

FRI DEC 8

8PM–11:45PM • FREE

PARTY: UGLY SWEATER PARTY

Don your ugliest wool and come celebrate the five-year anniversary of the Wildfire Project, a community organizing collective founded in the wake of Superstorm Sandy in the Rockaways.

*Starr Bar
214 Starr St., Bklyn*

SUN DEC 10

11AM–2PM • \$50

BRUNCH: MURALS & MIMOSAS:

A CELEBRATION OF WOMEN STREET ARTISTS OF COLOR Art and Resistance Through Education (ARTE) hosts a brunch in celebration of women artists and activists creating change around the world. Money raised will help realize a mural project designed by young incarcerated women in New York City. Included in the price of admission: an open wine and beer bar, homemade brunch hors d'oeuvres and an art exhibition honoring global women heroes. Tickets available at generosity.com.

248 Roebling St., Bklyn

SUN DEC 10

2PM–4PM • Sliding scale, \$6–\$15
WORKSHOP: COUNTER-CARTOGRAPHIES OF THE GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN

Is there ethical consumption under capitalism? This workshop from the Marxist Education Project will trace the passage of everyday commodities from their point of production to your doorstep and examine the infrastructure and 'externalized costs'—human, economic, social and environmental—of the international flow of things.

*New Perspectives Theatre Company
458 W. 37th St.*

WED DEC 13

6:30PM–8PM • FREE

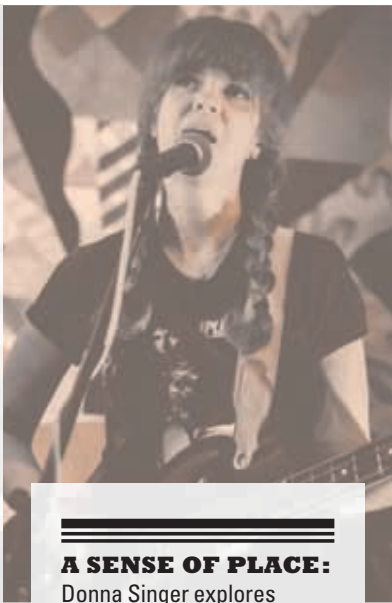
PHOTOGRAPHY: PICTURING PLACE: THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF RACE, CLASS, AND COMMUNITY

Photographers Brenda Ann Kenneally and Danna Singer portray the realities of intergenerational poverty and a complicated tangle of signification, race and class in the communities in which they were raised. Kenneally and Singer will appear in conversation with anthropologist John Hartigan Jr to discuss what it means to portray, embed in and study one's own community. Register in advance at acmeticketing.com.

*International Center for Photography Museum (Downtown)
250 Bowery*



JANUS FILMS



SAM/FICKR

A SENSE OF PLACE:

Donna Singer explores her Jersey roots in her photo series *If It Rained an Ocean*. She'll be joined by fellow photographer Brenda Ann Kenneally at the International Center of Photography on Dec. 13.

RENAISSANCE

MAN: *The Art Life*, showing at Videology on Nov. 22, takes you inside David Lynch's Hollywood home and showcases art works like this one to give viewers a glimpse of the man behind iconic films like *Blue Velvet* and *Mulholland Drive*.

LOVE IN ARABIC:

Rockers Habibi never fail to disappoint. Catch them at Baby's All Right on Nov. 29.

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Another jury fails to deliver justice for a slain Black man.

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A beloved LES community center could be reborn.

TAKING THE HEAT, P8

A young writer lives the chef's life.

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Working women prove there is power in numbers.

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A year since the Troll King was elected, what's changed?

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A Nuyorican returns to the island of his grandparents.

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40 years since punk exploded, it's still as relevant as ever.

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Former Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis explains what went wrong when Syriza came to power.

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Metropolises with the most at stake can make the biggest difference.

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What led to the deaths of 25 workers at a North Carolina chicken-processing plant in 1991? The answer might surprise you.

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POSITIVE PROOF, P22

An exhibition at Brooklyn Museum looks at the meaning of truth through three artists from three historical epochs.



DISBELIEF

DESPITE VIDEO EVIDENCE, BROOKLYN JURY LETS A KILLER COP WALK

By INDYPENDENT STAFF

Earlier this month, jurors at the New York State Supreme Court building in Brooklyn considered what, under different circumstances, would have been an open and shut murder case — save for one detail.

The victim, Delrawn Small, 37, died after he was shot three times during a late-night traffic dispute on Atlantic Avenue. A nearby surveillance camera captured evidence that directly contradicted the killer’s self-defense claim. Small was apparently shot without provocation the instant he reached his killer’s car.

It might have been a slam dunk case of murder, except that the accused, Wayne Isaacs, was a four-year veteran of the NYPD who was returning home after a shift at the 79th precinct the night he shot Small.

On Monday, Nov. 4 12 jurors — five black, five white, one Asian, one Latino — found Isaacs not guilty and delivered a crushing blow to the Small family. They also once again raised a question that has long troubled advocates for criminal justice reform: Just what the hell does it take to convict a police officer of killing a civilian in America?

“I feel like my brother was killed twice,” said Small’s sibling Victor Dempsey, who attended a rally of about 200 people at Union Square on Nov. 9 calling for Police Commissioner James O’Neill to fire Isaacs. The verdict “emphasized that his life didn’t matter.”

While both Small and his killer were black, to critics of the verdict the differentiating factor appeared to be Isaacs’ badge.

“If it was any one of us that had taken the life of another citizen or a police officer, then we would have actually been held accountable to the law,” said Carmen Dixon, an organizer with the NAACP’s Legal Defense Fund.

Isaacs’ trial was the first test of a special prosecuto-

rial unit overseen by New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman and established by Gov. Andrew Cuomo in 2015 to tackle instances in which police kill civilians. Out of 12 initial investigations, five remain open.

The acquittal comes more than three years since police on Staten Island were filmed fatally choking Eric Garner — a father of six accused of selling loose cigarettes. A grand jury refused to indict Daniel Pantaleo, the officer who placed Garner in a chokehold. A Justice Department civil rights investigation remains ongoing.

“How could this keeping happening?” Garner’s mother, Gwen Carr, asked in response to Isaacs’ acquittal. “They shouldn’t be above the law. They should abide by the same laws we abide by.”

Garner’s killing is one in a string of high-profile black civilian deaths at the hands of law enforcement across the country. Ferguson, Missouri; Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Baltimore, Maryland; Cleveland, Ohio; and Saint Paul, Minnesota have erupted in protests over police-perpetrated killings. In each instance, Lady Justice’s scales appear to have tilted in favor of police.

Here in New York, a long body count of dead civilians stands beside a record of police walking free. The list of the slain includes 16-year-old Kimani Gray in East Flatbush, 18-year-old Ramarley Graham of the Bronx and Akai Gurley, who was shot in the stairwell of a Brooklyn public housing development by Officer Peter Liang. Lang was convicted last year of manslaughter. His sentence: five years probation and 800 hours of community service.

The establishment of the special prosecutions unit was an effort to circumvent the tight-knit relationship between local district attorneys and the police who they work with on a daily basis.

Isaacs’ acquittal appears not to have been for lack of

effort on behalf of the prosecution. Even longtime critics of the criminal justice system conceded that Schneiderman’s team presented the evidence against the cop in an extremely compelling manner.

“It was the jury this time,” said State Assemblymember Charles Barron, who represents East New York and attended portions of Isaacs’ trial. “What this jury deliberated on, what they didn’t see in that video is beyond my belief. Juries, they see police in one light and black men, their own black men, in another light. When you have a society that’s criminalizing and saying black men are a menace to society — the ‘angry black man’ — sometimes the oppressed internalize their oppression.”

“I FEEL LIKE MY BROTHER WAS KILLED TWICE.”

Firing Isaacs, as Small’s family and supporters are demanding, might prove difficult, as the officer has already surpassed the two-year probationary period required to achieve tenure on the force. According to an NYPD spokesperson, Isaacs “will remain on a non-enforcement duty status, without a service weapon, while the department conducts its internal investigation.”



ERIK MCGREGOR

DEMANDING JUSTICE: Victoria Davis, sister of Delrawn Small, together with community advocates on Nov. 9 in Union Square.

SOME PLACES YOU CAN FIND

BELOW 14TH ST

SEWARD PARK LIBRARY
192 EAST BROADWAY

HAMILTON FISH LIBRARY
415 E. HOUSTON ST.

LES PEOPLE’S FEDERAL CREDIT UNION
39 AVENUE B

TOMPKINS SQUARE LIBRARY
331 E. 10TH ST.

BLUESTOCKINGS
172 ALLEN ST.

THEATER FOR THE NEW CITY
155 FIRST AVE.

MCNALLY JACKSON BOOKS
52 PRINCE ST.

FILM FORUM
209 W. HOUSTON ST.

CINEMA VILLAGE
22 E. 12TH ST.

LGBT CENTER
208 W. 13TH ST.

14TH to 96TH ST

EPIPHANY LIBRARY
228 E. 23RD ST.

MUHLENBERG LIBRARY
209 W. 23RD ST.

TACO BANDITO
325 8TH AVE.

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942 TENTH AVE.

ST. AGNES LIBRARY
444 AMSTERDAM AVE.

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112 E. 96TH ST.

ABOVE 96TH ST.

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203 W. 115TH

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224 E. 125TH ST.

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PICTURE THE HOMELESS
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COUNTEE CULLEN LIBRARY
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HAMILTON GRANGE LIBRARY
503 W. 145TH ST.

UPTOWN SISTER’S BOOKS
W. 156TH ST. & AMSTERDAM

FORT WASHINGTON LIBRARY
535 W. 179TH ST.

INWOOD LIBRARY
4790 BROADWAY

BROOKLYN

BROOKLYN COMMONS
388 ATLANTIC AVE.

COUSIN JOHN’S CAFE & BAKERY
70 7TH AVE.

BEACON’S CLOSET
92 5TH AVE.
PACIFIC STREET LIBRARY
25 FOURTH AVE.

SUNSET PARK LIBRARY
5108 4TH AVE.

CONNECTICUT MUFFIN
429 MYRTLE AVE.

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30 WYCKOFF AVE.

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340 BUSHWICK AVE.

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240 DIVISION AVE.

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146 BEDFORD AVE.

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560 NEW YORK AVE.

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1044 EASTERN PARKWAY

FLATBUSH LIBRARY
22 LINDEN BLVD.

TUGBOAT TEA COMPANY
546 FLATBUSH AVE.

OUTPOST CAFE
1014 FULTON ST.

RED HOOK LIBRARY
7 WOLCOTT ST.

ALIGN BROOKLYN
579 5TH AVE.

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5108 4TH AVE.

BAY RIDGE LIBRARY
7223 RIDGE BLVD.

STARR BAR
214 STARR ST.

QUEENS

COURT SQUARE LIBRARY
2501 JACKSON AVE.

LONG ISLAND CITY LIBRARY
37-44 21ST ST.

JACKSON HEIGHTS LIBRARY
35-51 81ST ST.

BRONX

MOTT HAVEN LIBRARY
321 E. 140TH ST.

HUNT’S POINT LIBRARY
877 SOUTHERN BLVD.

THE POINT
940 GARRISON AVE.

HIGH BRIDGE LIBRARY
78 W. 168TH ST.

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BRIEFING ROOM



THOMAS HAWK

ELECTION ROUNDUP

On Nov. 7, voters in state and local elections across the country took advantage of the chance to return to the polls for the first time since President Trump's upset victory a year earlier to punish his fellow Republicans. Democrats won governor's seats in New Jersey and Virginia and flipped the Washington State Senate away from Republican control. Voters in Maine approved a referendum to use Obamacare funds to expand Medicaid coverage after the state's Tea Party governor, Paul LePage, vetoed the same measure five times.

Here in New York City, Mayor Bill de Blasio was re-elected with 67 percent of the vote. While the race received scant attention, de Blasio managed to garner over 140,000 more votes than former Mayor Michael Bloomberg did in his 2009 re-election campaign. Democrats also prevailed in New York's suburbs, winning control of Nassau and Westchester Counties and bouncing immigrant-bashing Republican incumbents from office. A ballot measure to convene a state constitutional convention was rejected by New York voters by a margin of 83 to 17 percent.

LEFTIST SURGE

Numerous electoral gains were made by socialists and progressives on Nov. 7. Radical attorney Larry Krasner, who sued Philadelphia's police force more than 75 times on behalf of Black Lives Matter activists, Occupy Wall Street protesters and others, won the city's District Attorney race by a landslide. Across the country, 15 members of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) were elected to office, including Lee Carter, who succeeded in ousting the Republican Majority Whip of the Virginia House of Delegates. There are now a total of 35 DSA members holding office nationwide.

In Brooklyn, DSA member Jabari Brisport scored 29 percent of the vote, the best ever for a Green Party candidate in a City Council race. In seeking to represent Crown Heights, Brisport made opposition to gentrification a central tenet of his campaign. "We are building a political coalition that is the social framework for the future," Brisport told *The Independent*. "I want to be able to use and apply that to other struggles ... I hope my campaign is an inspiration to further Green and socialist candidacies."

A BLOW TO LOCAL NEWS

One week after voting to join the Writers Guild of America East, *DNAinfo* and *Gothamist* were abruptly shut down on Nov. 2. "[U]nions promote a corrosive us-against-them dynamic that destroys the esprit de corps businesses need to succeed," the billionaire owner of the combined newsrooms, Joe Ricketts, griped in a September blog post, foreshadowing the demise of the local digital news outlets. Coming on the heels of cutbacks at the local desk of the *New York Times* and the cessation of the *Village Voice's* print edition, the closures have left a vast void in New York's media ecosystem.

"The implication is huge," Gersh Kuntzman, a former editor for *Brooklyn Paper* told the *Huffington Post*. "The major dailies do not cover local news on a granular level in the way that *DNAinfo* and *Gothamist* did."

ICONIC ICONOGRAPHY:

The 5Pointz building in Long Island City, Queens in 2013, the year it was painted over and demolished by developer Jerry Wolkoff.

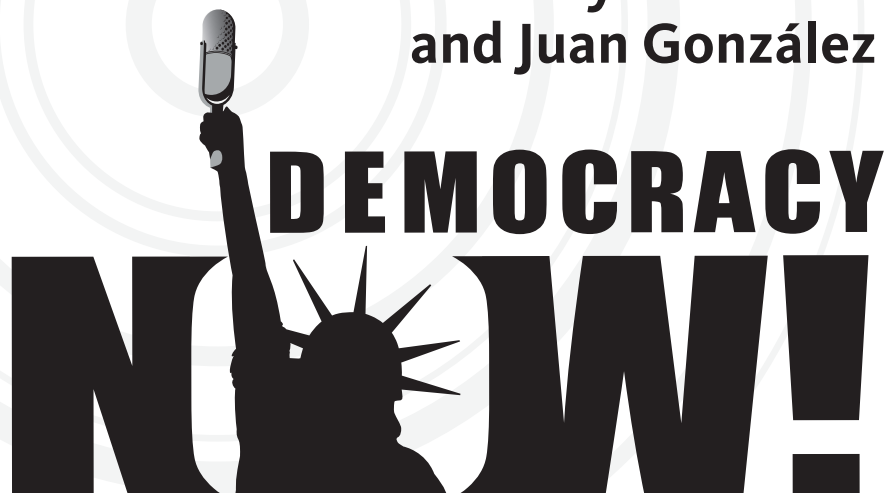
A VICTORY FOR GRAFFITI ARTISTS

Jurors at a federal court in Brooklyn on Nov. 7 sided with 21 artists who brought suit against developer Jerry Wolkoff for whitewashing their paintings at the iconic 5Pointz building in Long Island City. For over two decades, 5Pointz served as a haven for taggers and muralists in Queens, who, with Wolkoff's consent, painted the building in a myriad of ever-changing aerosol colors. Wolkoff violated the artists' rights under the 1990 Visual Artists Rights Act, jurors ruled, by failing to give them 90 days notice before painting over their work as he prepared to demolish the building and replace it with condominiums in 2013. Judge Frederic Block is currently weighing whether to accept the jury's recommendation and is expected to rule in the coming weeks. If upheld, the verdict will represent the first time graffiti has been protected under federal law.

— INDEPENDENT STAFF

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and Juan González



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The Combahee River Collective, a trailblazing group of radical Black feminists, was one of the most important organizations to develop out of the antiracist and women's liberation movements of the 1960s and '70s. In this collection of interviews edited by activist-scholar Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, founding members of the organization and contemporary activists reflect on the legacy of its contributions to Black feminism and its impact on today's struggles.



Featuring
Barbara Smith, Beverly Smith
Demita Frazier, Alicia Garza
and Barbara Ransby

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TRANSIT

THE MTA'S NEXT BIG
BOONDOGGLE?

\$574 MILLION CONTRACT AWARDED TO COMPANY
THAT BOTCHED CHICAGO ROLLOUT

BY FEDERICO DI PASQUA

There is one thing that New York City's crumbling, hazardous, \$43-billion indebted transit system needs to do to fix itself: replace the MetroCard with an app. That's according to Joseph Lhota, chair of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) and his allies on the agency's governing board.

This \$574 million plan, announced by the MTA board on Oct. 25, will implement a fare system the utilizes contactless bank cards and mobile payments to replace the MetroCard. Transactions will be conducted through apps like Apple Pay, as well as "contactless cards," credit or debit cards embedded with chips that rely on wireless near field communication technology.

"The move to a truly 21st century method of payment represents a critical step in our overall efforts at modernizing the subway system and improving service for all our customers," Lhota, appointed by Gov. Andrew Cuomo in June, said.

Tapping a credit card or smartphone at a turnstile instead of a MetroCard could amount to a significant time-saver for New York commuters. In addition, the new technology will allow all-door boarding on buses, reducing travel time. These undeniable improvements, however, come at a time of unprecedented emergency at the agency.

Just as the MTA board began extolling the introduction of the costly fare system, New York City Councilmember Helen Rosenthal released a call for an independent commission to study the MTA's runaway costs.

"By every available metric, the MTA has the highest capital costs in the world, spending several times more than other global cities for similar projects," the chair of the City Council's Contracts Committee wrote on Oct. 24 in a public letter to Lhota signed by 27 of her colleagues. In a related press release, Rosenthal noted that while Paris was "able to build a new line for \$370 million per mile, Phase I of the Second Avenue subway cost \$2.7 billion per mile."

The contactless fare scheme might seem less absurd if it increased the transit system's efficiency. This may not be the case.

The MTA has commissioned Cubic Transportation Inc., which designed the MetroCard, to install the new fare system.

The company has a singular record of failures in the United States.

Chicagoan blogger Olivia Cole described Cubic's Ventra payment system as "proof that CTA hates us" after the Chicago Transit Authority introduced it to the Windy City in 2013.

"From bank cards being charged in addition to the Ventra card, to inexplicably nonfunctional cards, to a completely and utterly mystifying account interface online, to fundamentally clueless customer care employees, to hour-long hotline waits and, oh, let's not forget the fact that you are instructed to pay cash when your already-paid-for Ventra card doesn't work on their worthless scanner... Ventra has been (and continues to be) a nightmare," Cole wrote.

When, last November, Cubic's contactless system in San Francisco fell under attack from a virus, hackers threatened to leak passengers' personal data while demanding a ransom of \$73,000 in bitcoin. The incident exemplified how a fully digitalized fare system that tracks rider locations and requires intimate financial information provides room for Orwellian scenarios.

MTA spokesman Joe Weinstein told the *New York Times* in October that the agency would implement "the most stringent security standards and protocols" to safeguard riders' data. Nonetheless the prospect of more than 8 million daily commuters being hacked looms over the Cubic deal.

If Lhota caves to political pressure and establishes an independent commission, it could prevent future money squandering projects like the contactless fare system, not to mention the 7 line extension and Second Avenue subway. Maybe then MTA would start providing an efficient service to the people of New York.

A CHANCE AT NEW LIFE FOR A LES COMMUNITY HUB

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

After fighting for almost 20 years to save and regain a beloved neighborhood community space, Lower East Side activists finally heard encouraging words from City Hall in October — but the promise is still a ways away from becoming reality.

At a town meeting on Oct. 12, Mayor Bill de Blasio said the city had an “interest in reacquiring” the former Charas community center, that Rudolph Giuliani’s administration selling it to a private developer in 1998 was a “mistake” and it was time to “right the wrongs of the past.”

“We’re ecstatic,” City Councilmember Rosie Mendez told *The Independent* before a rally at City Hall on Nov. 6 — but Charas supporters are still waiting for more details.

The building, a former public school at 605 East Ninth Street, has been vacant since 2001, when developer Gregg Singer was finally able to evict Charas. Singer has been trying for years to convert the space into student housing, but has been stymied by neighborhood opposition and his inability to satisfy restrictions in the building’s deed that say it must be used exclusively as a “community facility.”

Most recently, the city’s Department of Buildings denied him a permit to convert part of the building into a dormitory for Adelphi University, on the grounds that to qualify as a bona fide dorm, it had to be entirely for full-time students at an institution with at least a 10-year lease. Under Singer’s plan, says longtime Save Charas Committee organizer Susan Howard, anyone with a student ID could rent a room there, so it could be a for-profit hostel. Singer appealed the denial to the city Board of Standards and Appeals last month.

The abandoned P.S. 64 was taken over in 1979 by a group of neighborhood activists that included Armando Perez, Chino Garcia and the late poet Bimbo Rivas, who coined “Loisaida” as a Spanglish name for the neighborhood. For more than 20 years, Charas

was a center for activism, arts and social services such as computer, construction-skills and English-as-a-second-language classes. Its theater hosted the 1983 premiere of *Joe’s Bed-Stuy Barbershop: We Cut Heads*, the first full-length feature by film student Spike Lee.

But in 1996, the Giuliani administration decided to sell three city-owned Lower East Side buildings that were occupied by community arts centers: Charas, Clemente Soto Velez (CSV) and ABC No Rio. CSV worked out a deal to retain its building and ABC No Rio did too, after several years of protest and litigation. But Charas was auctioned off to Singer for \$3.15 million, despite protesters disrupting the proceedings by releasing 10,000 live crickets.

It was widely believed in the neighborhood that the sale was revenge for Armando Perez organizing a voter-registration drive that scared the district’s City Councilmember, pro-gentrification Giuliani Democrat Antonio Pagan, out of running for re-election. “I think Pagan was the instigator, and we all know how vindictive and brutal Giuliani was,” says Howard.

Perez was murdered in 1999, in a confrontation with thugs outside his wife’s building in Queens. The Nov. 6 rally commemorated what would have been his 70th birthday.

If the city were to reacquire the building, two likely ways would be negotiating to buy it back from Singer or seizing it by eminent domain. Either way, it would have to pay him market value, which he says would be between \$80 and 90 million.

Susan Howard says the city should void the sale, on the grounds that Singer did not show he had a viable plan to fulfill the community-facility requirement within 45 days after the sale. She believes he thought he could get away with it because of the Giu-

GIVE IT BACK:

Charas co-founder Chino Garcia speaks as supporters of reestablishing the Charas community center rally at City Hall on Nov. 6.

STEVEN WISHNIA

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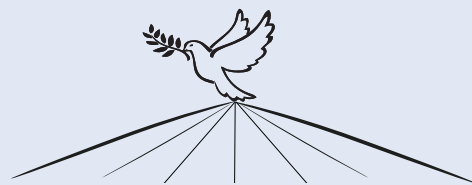
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THE MISFITS BEHIND NEW YORK'S HAUTE CUISINE

BY GORDON GLASGOW

“Where’s Stephen?” asked Ravi Sharma, the chef de cuisine at Paowalla, the recently established culinary powerhouse of SoHo, wiping sweat off his forehead with one hand while checking on the shishito pakoras with his other.

“Stephen? Uhm, Stephen ran downstairs,” I responded, shaking a little, worried I would somehow be blamed for Stephen’s sudden absence.

Ravi peered left and right across the cramped, steaming kitchen before solemnly looking me in the eyes. “He must be in the freezer again,” he said. “Can you go get him? We have fire on two halibuts and a vindaloo. He needs to get started on them now.”

“Yes, chef. On my way.”

I walked to the narrow staircase leading downstairs, where, as in many New York restaurants, the prep kitchen, dry food storage, fridge and freezer are located. “Coming down!” I yelled, so as to avoid any potential collision as I headed down the vertiginous steps. I turned the tight corner of the prep kitchen, walked two doors down and came to the entrance of the freezer.

There were a pair of black kitchen shoes with socks stuffed into them waiting on the outside. The door was slightly cracked open. I could hear Stephen incoherently mumbling to himself inside the freezer. “Onion ... fuck ... shit ... fire ... fuck ... tamarind,” was all I could make out. I was genuinely worried for his mental health but didn’t want to be the one to drag him out of there. Then again, I also didn’t want to go back upstairs to tell the chef de cuisine that my mission to retrieve Stephen was unsuccessful.

Stephen was the most experienced line cook working that evening at Paowalla, which specializes in upscale Indian cuisine and is operated by the well-known chef Floyd Cardoz. Stephen was in charge of the grill, the oven, the stove — the kitchen’s most important station, always manned by an accomplished and competent cook. He had been sweating buckets all night. Standing directly over the grill, he’d looked like he was going to pass out at any moment. The air conditioner in the kitchen was broken and only a small fan kept the staff semi-cool in the 90 degree heat.

I built up some nerve and slowly opened the heavy freezer door. Stephen was in the far end of the walk-in with his back turned to me, head in hands. I quickly eased the door shut before he had the chance to notice and rushed back up the stairs where I came back face-to-face with Chef Ravi.

“I’m sorry, chef,” I said. “Stephen seems really upset and since I just met him today I don’t feel like I can be the one to get him back upstairs.” I realized I was blabbering.

“Don’t worry about it,” Chef Ravi replied. “It’s his fifth shift in a row. I’ll go get him.”

His understanding was a relief. This was my first day on the job and what little I knew about kitchen work was that you never disobey an order. I took a deep breath and returned to finely slicing green mangoes to be brined. Stephen returned to his station at the grill and successfully finished his shift — an impressive feat, done night after night, anonymously.

• • •

I’d never desired to become a chef, but, as an aspiring writer, I thought that finding a menial job with as-

pects of repetition would keep my mind from wandering off. I also needed money. Impulsively, one Saturday evening after spending too much at a bar, I began applying for line cook positions at culinaryagents.com. Following a string of emails and phone calls, I was set up as a “kitchen trail” at three respective restaurants: Loring Place, a New-American restaurant in Greenwich Village opened by ABC Kitchen alum Dan Kluger; Shalom Japan, a Japanese/Jewish fusion restaurant in Williamsburg; and Paowalla. I was expected to bring my own set of knives and spend evening shifts helping around the kitchen. On Tuesday, it would be Shalom Japan; Wednesday, Loring Place; and on Thursday, Paowalla.

After a couple of nights as a trail I began to wonder why anyone would choose to spend their life in a small, 95-degree rectangular box, working 13-hour-days, cutting, cooking and cleaning, making hardly any money in order to craft cuisine for an apathetic clientele who take food for granted and are usually too consumed with their own vacant existence to appreciate the sacrifice that nameless and faceless cooks put their backs into.

Before the freezer episode, I got a chance to talk to Stephen at Paowalla during family meal, when leftover meat and vegetables are served to front and back house staff before each shift begins. Stephen, the son of Korean immigrants, went to University of California, Davis, but dropped out in his sophomore year to come to New York. He found a job as a back-waiter at Balthazar on Spring Street before saving up enough to enroll himself at The Culinary Institute of Education. Once he graduated he landed a 9-dollar-an-hour job as a line cook at Morimoto in the Meatpacking District. He often wound up assisting Chef Masaharu Morimoto himself — a man famous for his obsessive standards and kitchen discipline.

“It was like the army,” Stephen recalled. “It was painful but I’ll never regret it.”

After slaving it at Morimoto for two years Stephen took a three year hiatus from cooking. He fell in love with a sommelier at Morimoto who came from money, but something inexplicable eventually drew him back to the kitchen.

• • •

The culinary underworld is a cult of identity composed of eccentrics, mavericks, oddballs and individualists who find in the kitchen a place where they finally fit in. The fast-paced, all-consuming environment of the back of a restaurant gives them purpose, a reason to get up in the morning. They possess a desire for belonging as much as for fine cuisine. When you step into a kitchen all else is lost, all that matters is the here and now. Food needs to be prepared and served and there is no time to dally or navel gaze.

There is a bizarre paradox between the front and back of the house in the restaurant industry. Few things are more intense than being in an open kitchen, hearing the chef de cuisine yell out orders while each line cook has the utmost focus on the job at hand, sweating profusely, trying to get food out as soon as possible, while beyond the kitchen walls you can hear families singing “Happy Birthday.” Meals that are painstakingly assembled and often take days to prepare, sometimes go cold on a table, waiting to be eaten, or are gobbled up without

a thought. I sometimes wanted to yell at the patrons, “Don’t you assholes realize the hard work that’s gone into that?” Never again will I take food for granted.

• • •

Masculinity, homophobia, abuse and racism are classical tropes of old-school kitchen culture, but Shalom Japan was the only place where I felt any pinch of these workplace qualities — mostly from one line cook in particular.

“Do you like Spanish girls?” a fat, bald chef asked before introducing himself.

“Sure,” I responded, uneasily cutting up celery by the back kitchen window. I don’t like these types of questions, they never lead anywhere good.

“Well, we call this window mamacita heaven,” he said proudly. “You wouldn’t believe some of the ass we see walking by. I’m Daniel by the way.”

Chef Daniel wore a bandana, made gay jokes all night and could talk about cocaine without end. Yet, for all his vulgarity, there was also something strangely personable about him. He showed a great deal of patience with my abominable knife skills, spending plenty of time teaching me how to properly cut scallops even though he had many other things to do. In the constricted downstairs prep area, Chef Daniel pointed to the smelly staff bathroom. “This is where we go to cry,” he said.

• • •

Dan Kluger’s Loring Place was the most modern kitchen I worked in. It was picturesque, almost out of a Nordic lifestyle magazine. There were six stations in all: a deep fryer, a wood-fired and a gas-fired grill, a brick pizza oven, a pasta station and a cold appetizer station. In a nearby corridor there was a rack filled with long-sleeved chef’s t-shirts, pants and aprons — all clean, immaculate and bleached white. When I stepped into the uniform I felt more official, like my life suddenly had a defining aspect. It’s incredible, the instant sense of identity that a uniform can provide. There was thrill to it too, like playing dress-up.

Chef Seth Seligman showed me around the basement work area.

“This is our butcher room, rare for a restaurant in New York,” he said, briskly. There was a surprisingly tall man in there taking apart what must have once been a cow. “Here’s the refrigerator, everything dated and labeled. Here’s the freezer. Over here are our newly arrived fresh fruits and vegetables. “And back this way...” Chef Seth turned around and escorted me back down the hallway we’d been walking through, “is the prep kitchen. Grab a cutting board.”

Loring Place serves New-American food, which basically means many different kinds of cuisine; in this case, a fusion of Italian and Mediterranean with a subtle Asian influence. Due to Chef Dan Kluger’s time spent under Jean Georges-Vongerichten at ABC

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Kitchen, Loring Place has a particular concentration on the use of fresh vegetables.

Before customers arrived I had destemmed 40 artichokes, plucked the tops off of thousands of strawberries, diced pile on pile of zucchini, garlic, onions, kohlrabi and weird sea vegetables. I was told to go upstairs when dinner began. Chef Seth advised me to try to spend some time at each station, with one caveat: “Don’t do anything unless someone asks you to.”

I spent the night as a slow cog in a well-oiled machine, annoyingly hovering over each line cook, helping them quickly assemble dishes. One chef had me finely cut tomatoes and garlic because he had run out of what had been prepped earlier. At another station, I was tasked with scooping a dollop of hummus into a small dish, topping it with olive oil, roasted chickpeas and exactly 11 pieces of cut radish, then placing precisely 12 whole grain crackers beside it. The crackers and the hummus, like nearly everything at Loring Place, are made in house.

One luxurious aspect of working in a kitchen is the opportunity to taste almost everything on the menu. At Loring Place I was given small bites to eat by cooks from each station in the kitchen. Their baked ricotta with wood-grilled broccoli is fantastic. At Paowalla, the deep-fried squash blossoms filled with goat cheese linger in my memory too — although, I once made the mistake of dipping cheese naan into the squash blossom sauce, a faux pas that Chef Ravi did not appreciate. In fact, I thought he was gonna slap me in the face. Fortunately, in the end, all I received was a dirty look.

Toward the end of the night at Loring Place I found myself at the dessert station. I wasn’t so enthusiastic about preparing desserts but I knew they would give me some to try. There was also a very pretty pastry chef named Allison working there that evening, making fruit salad. She had light brown eyes and an ironclad demeanor. I got in her way several times and she abrasively ordered me to use a different sink than hers. Her commands reminded me of what it was like to be reprimanded in grade school.

“How did you end up here?” I asked, attempting to make small talk. The question struck me as funny the second it left my mouth — as if she had been dragged from her home, given a trial and sentenced to labor as a

Continued on page 15



DAVID HOLLENBACH

TALKING TURKEY

Maybe it is Thanksgiving, maybe it is Friendsgiving. You’ve been bragging all over town about the feast you are going to serve up. Your family, friends, neighbors, your bar buddies and your bail bondsman will be arriving at your pad in a number of hours. The simple truth of the matter is you have no idea how to roast a turkey. Or maybe you thought you knew how but then you caught the end of a Food Network segment proclaiming that you’ve been doing it wrong all these years. Relax. Have an eggnog.

Cooking is for everyone, regardless of your budget or experience. And more than anything it should be fun! Life is stressful enough in the age of latent capitalist apocalypse!

It seems every year about this time a cast of celebrity chefs begin making the rounds, presenting the public new recipes for what is a traditional American meal. Two years ago was all about the wet brine. But no, we learned last year wet brines sap turkey of its natural flavor, dry brining works best. That’s the beauty of food, there are a million ways of cooking basic traditional staples. It is also a side effect of the hyper-commercialization of food and can be confusing.

Here’s a simple recipe for roasting turkey. You might want to do some research on your own and decide which brining technique you prefer best or skip that step entirely. These instructions will work whether you have brined or not.*

We recommend practicing a bit in advance on a chicken, essentially the turkey’s smaller cousin. Just adjust the ratios of butter and seasoning by about a third or half depending on the difference in pounds between the two winged creatures. After you’ve practiced a bit, you might

want to put your own stamp on the animal. Try adding a teaspoon or two of paprika or cayenne, or substituting creole spices or Old Bay for fresh herbs. I like to sear my birds on the stovetop using a large, cast-iron enamel pan before putting them in the oven. Maybe I’ll share that recipe next year, but we’re keeping it basic this time.

INGREDIENTS

1 fresh turkey (10–12 pounds)
1 stick of butter
1 tablespoon each of finely chopped parsley, rosemary, thyme and sage
1 lemon
1 head of garlic, protruding stalk and papery exterior removed
2 tablespoons of salt
1 tablespoon of pepper

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Large roasting pan
Cooking twine
Cheese grater
Tin foil
Meat thermometer

Remove turkey and butter from refrigerator to bring to room temperature about one hour before beginning preparations. When you are ready to get cooking, set your oven to 450 degrees. Finely grate lemon to produce about a tablespoon of zest. Halve lemon. Combine herbs, salt, pepper, lemon zest and the juice of one squeezed lemon half with butter.

Remove turkey from wrapping and extract any innards in the bird’s cavity. If you want to get thrifty, you can

mince up the gizzard, heart and liver into a stuffing or rice dressing or feed them to your dog. Otherwise these items can be tossed.

Wash and pat turkey dry with a paper towel. Using your hands (you can do it!), rub turkey all over with the lemon-herb-butter mixture. Gently tear and reach under its skin with your fingers and rub the region above the breasts with the flavoring mixture. Tuck turkey wings underneath the bird so they will not burn.

Insert garlic head and remaining lemon half into the turkey’s cavity. Tie the turkey’s legs together over the cavity. This prevents the bird from drying out as it cooks and locks in the piquancy of the garlic and lemon inside.

Place bird on roasting pan breast side up and insert into the middle rung of your oven. After 20 minutes or when the top is dark brown, reduce the temperature to 325 degrees. From here on out keep an eye on your bird but resist the temptation to baste. While it will give you something to do, opening and closing the oven frequently interrupts the cooking process. If the breasts look like they are beginning to burn, carefully give your turkey a tinfoil hat.

After three to three and a half hours, or once its temperature reaches 160 degrees in multiple locations, remove turkey from the oven. Wait 20 minutes before carving.

**If you are looking for a meatless centerpiece dish to fill the turkey void, we highly recommend culinary podcaster Dan Pashman’s “veggieducken.” The recipe is available at sporkful.com.*

— PETER RUGH

WORKING-CLASS WOMEN SAY '#METOO'

BY CAMILA QUARTA

In the days and weeks since evidence of Harvey Weinstein's decades-long pattern of sexual abuse surfaced, millions of women, trans and gender nonconforming people, even men around the world have exposed the scale of sexual violence in our society, telling their own stories using the hashtag #MeToo.

A slew of men in positions of power — from British Defense Secretary Michael Fallon to actor Kevin Spacey — have been accused of sexual misconduct and many of them are finally facing real consequences. #MeToo set off a profound moment of collective bravery, a moment that would have been impossible without the broad sense of solidarity and support that welcomed people coming forward.

I still vividly remember feeling the power of such support during a SlutWalk protest in 2012, as we rallied at Praça Roosevelt in São Paulo, Brazil. We were all gathered in an enormous circle. At one moment, a protester came up to one of the women leading the rally with the megaphone and whispered in her ear. The woman with the megaphone announced that there was a man in the back — she pointed, we all pointed — in a gray shirt, blue cap and sunglasses, who was touching the women without their consent. Hundreds of us chanted at him to get out, our voices getting louder, faster, angrier. He fled. It was the first time I cried about my rape.

Yet, despite the mass outpouring of #MeToo stories, we know that there are millions of other people who can't or choose not to speak out in this particular way. In the overwhelming majority of cases in which survivors come forward, they are dismissed, their names are dragged through the mud, institutions try to cover up the wrongdoing or retaliate against them.

For decades, women have been coming forward about their experiences of being abused, harassed, assaulted and raped by renowned men. The difference now is that they are being believed. The confidence that the #MeToo welcoming has given survivors goes beyond the inner circles of the rich and famous.

In the lead-up to a "Take Back the Workplace" march that stormed the streets of Hollywood on Nov. 12, the Alianza Nacional de Campesinas, an organization made up of female farmworkers and women who come from farmworker families, released a moving letter of solidarity with the women in Hollywood who have come forward in the wake of the Weinstein scandal.

"Even though we work in very different environments, we share a common experience of being preyed upon by individuals who have the power to hire, fire, blacklist and otherwise threaten our economic, physical and emotional security," the letter reads. "As you cope with scrutiny and criticism be-

cause you have bravely chosen to speak out against the harrowing acts that were committed against you, please know that you're not alone. We believe and stand with you."

As many as 80 percent of female agricultural workers are abused or raped in the fields, according to a 2010 study in the journal *Violence Against Women*. Because so many of these workers are undocumented immigrants, speaking out can mean risking deportation and being torn away from their families.

Sexual violence and harassment extend to all levels of society, but working-class women often experience its impact disproportionately. One of the ultimate expressions of dehumanization and objectification, sexual violence is part and parcel for a society that functions based on women's exploitation. It both stems from and reinforces women's inequality and the different ways that women experience that inequality.

Women are incommensurately burdened with unpaid domestic labor and childrearing. They make less money than their male counterparts for the same work. Sixty percent of families headed by a single mother live in poverty. The United States is still the only country in the world other than Papua New Guinea and Lesotho that does not guarantee paid maternity leave for new mothers. The decline in social spending — from the destruction of welfare programs to reductions in food stamps and cutbacks in childcare services — has made the situation of women and their families even more precarious. The devaluation of women goes all the way to and comes all the way from the top where an admitted rapist sits in the White House.

It comes as no surprise, then, that working-class women are especially vulnerable to sexual violence in the workplace. A recent ABC News-*Washington Post* poll found that 3 in 10 women have put up with unwanted advances from male co-workers and a quarter have endured them from men who had influence over their jobs. Among women who have been subjected to sexual violence in the workplace, 95 percent say that male perpetrators usually go unpunished.

Sexual violence in the workplace helps maintain women's unequal status and creates greater obstacles for women to advocate for themselves. Legitimizing sexual violence in the workplace helps legitimize it outside of the workplace, contributing to and shaping sexist ideas in society at large.

Women are relied on as a permanent, low-wage sector and many are located in overwhelmingly "female" occupations based on sexist ideas about what women are supposedly naturally predisposed to do, such as nursing and teaching kindergarten through 12th grade. Women make up more than 75 percent of the workforce in the 10 lowest-wage occupations in the United States, with nearly half of them being women of color, according to the National Women's

Law Center. In low-wage jobs, women, particularly black women, face astronomical levels of harassment and abuse.

A 2014 study found that 80 percent of women restaurant workers experienced sexual harassment from customers, two-thirds from managers and half from co-workers. Eighty percent of hotel workers also experience sexual violence on the job. Women workers in the janitorial industry — disproportionately women of color, 70 percent of whom are undocumented — also face staggering levels of harassment, assault and rape.

The #MeToo campaign struck such a profound chord and became a powerful expression of the growing rage not because most of us have had the experience of being abused and exploited in Hollywood, but because of the pervasive reality of sexual violence in people's everyday lives, because our lived experiences fly in the face of everything we've been told about how we live in a "post-feminist" era.

We understand the significance of the #MeToo moment, just as we understood the significance of millions taking to the streets for the women's marches the day after President Trump's inauguration in what became the largest day of protest in U.S. history. These events are what allow us to recognize that the oppression that weighs down on us is not of our own doing but that it goes beyond us. Our shared understanding is what allows us to begin to challenge gender-based violence not individually, but on a social level, against the institutions and systemic inequalities that dictate and distort the conditions in which we live.

That SlutWalk protest in 2012 not only helped me come to terms with my emotions surrounding my rape but it was also the first time I realized that we, the majority, united, organized, have the power and potential to win.

Camila Quarta is a socialist activist and a long-time organizer in the anti-sexual violence movement. She was involved in the movement during its peak (2014-2015) at Columbia University, from which she graduated in 2016.



A YEAR OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY UNDER THE TRUMP REGIME

BY DANNY KATCH

It's been a year since hell froze over. This should be a moment of sober reflection, but it's still so damn hard to concentrate with this deranged clown occupying the White House, monopolizing Twitter and crowding into our every conversation.

Donald Trump is just as brilliant as he thinks he is at one thing and one thing alone: being a world class troll — a master at shooting another spitball at the back of your head at just the moment when you thought he'd finally given up, at making the exact Twitter comment to get you to break your three-day pledge to stop getting into internet debates.

Twelve months after his election we're still in a state of shock and agitation because he keeps finding ways to hit new lows while he raises the stakes to new highs. In January it was, "Can you believe he's feuding with Alec Baldwin and hanging up on the Australian Prime Minister!" Now it's, "Dear God, he's praising neo-Nazis and threatening the Korean peninsula with nuclear annihilation."

The other reason why many people continue to be baffled by Trump's presidency is that he seems to be defying political gravity. He somehow won the election with only a 38 percent approval rating from the people leaving voting booths and has only become less popular since, but he keeps doubling down on the pettiness and hate.

The president is "playing to his base," as the pundits say disapprovingly. There shouldn't be anything wrong with an elected official doing the very things that got them elected by voters — except in a dysfunctional democracy where those voters represent nowhere near a majority of the populace.

Trump's base is a minority rump, a basket of truly deplorable forces — alt-Nazis, union-busting billionaires, power-grabbing generals, Christian crusaders and "Black Lives Don't Matter" cops — surrounded by millions so consumed by despair that they've embraced the nihilism of the Trump wrecking ball the way many of us cheer on the destruction of major cities when we're watching movies about alien invasions.

But if we avert our eyes from the blinding beam of orange garbage and look at what's been happening to the rest of the political establishment since last November, the structures that are propping Trump up start to come into view. In an era of profound political polarization, when millions are gravitating toward both socialism and fascism, the two-party system has shown itself to be far more responsive to pressure from the right than from the left.

The wave of premature retirements from supposedly "moderate" (as in corporate) Republicans has made it clear that Trump's victory last year was two-fold: he defeated the Republican Party before

he beat the Democrats. The traditional first party of American capitalism is more dominated by its insular far-right "populist" than it's been in at least 80 years.

In the Democratic Party, the battle appears more unresolved. On the one hand, Bernie Sanders is the country's most popular politician and the recent elections saw victories by a number of local Democrats associated with the Democratic Socialists of America. Socialism in at least some form is becoming mainstream in a country whose leading political export has long been anti-communism. But with the important exception of Sanders' campaign for single-payer health care, party leaders have no proposals — other than being less of a disaster than Trump — for Puerto Rico, rising rents, police murders, climate change or any other pressing issue.

An objective look at the Democratic Party as a whole — including the candidates who won the top-of-the-ballot races in the last election — makes it clear that the party continues to be dominated by centrists determined to follow the failed Hillary Clinton strategy of courting all those enlightened wealthy Republicans in the suburbs supposedly alienated by Trump's bigotry. Not only that, but while Steve Bannon plans a wave of primary challenges in 2018 against Republican congressional incumbents who are insufficiently loyal to Trump, the left inside the Democratic Party isn't challenging moderate incumbents for fear that it could undermine the party's chances at retaking Congress.

The right is more confident and radical than the left. This is the central political dynamic of our time and it hasn't changed over the past year, despite many encouraging signs of a socialist revival. Trump, Bannon and Steven Miller are unafraid to throw the existing ruling-class order into chaos by ripping up trade deals and treaties, while many leftists who are a million miles from holding power worry that it's not feasible to take a principled stand against the border controls and bombing runs that are cornerstones of American empire.

This is to be expected. With vast sums of money at its disposal from corporate America as well as reactionary billionaires like the Koch Brothers, the Mercer Family and Sheldon Adelson, the right has had a 40-year head start in developing itself through think tanks, media like Fox News and Breitbart, and thousands of elected and appointed officials at all levels of government.

The good news is that the left can quickly make up ground because we don't need decades of propa-

ganda and shadowy networks to galvanize millions of people into action, which is the other side of what we've seen in 2017. The year of Trump has also been the year of anti-Trump. From the people who marched on election night and inauguration weekend to the airport occupations that helped stop the first travel ban, to the unlikely vanguard role being played by professional football players taking a knee and Hollywood actresses calling out rapists, this president has made America protest again.

This spirit of resistance found its way into the voting booths last month, as immigrants, trans people and socialists won local races in a powerful rejection of Trump's reactionary bigotry. On the whole, however, there is an enormous gap between the official politics of the two-party system and the widespread desire for thoroughgoing and systematic change. It's notable that almost every significant protest this year has arisen more from social media and spontaneity than from the many unions and well-funded

HAIL TO THE CREEP: President Trump addresses U.S. troops at Yokota Air Base in Japan on Nov. 5.



SENTHILIAH/WHITE HOUSE

THE RIGHT IS MORE CONFIDENT AND RADICAL THAN THE LEFT. THIS IS THE CENTRAL POLITICAL DYNAMIC OF OUR TIME.

advocacy groups with central offices in Washington, D.C. That's impressive, but also limiting.

The question facing us as we enter Year Two is whether the stirrings of a potentially powerful new left can cohere into organizations and social movements that can provide a productive outlet to the rage against injustice and inequality that so many people are feeling. If not, our resistance will be steered back into following the message of right-wing Democrats to get in line behind "anybody but Trump." Nothing would make the Troll King happier.

Danny Katch is the author of *Why Bad Governments Happen to Good People* (2017) and *Socialism...Seriously: A Brief Guide to Human Liberation* (2015), both from Haymarket Books.

ISLAND OF LIGHT, ISLAND OF SHADOW

MY JOURNEY HOME TO PUERTO RICO

By NICHOLAS POWERS

“Here’s where the hurricane tore off my roof,” she pointed upward. We look at exposed wood beams under open sky. “It was horrible,” Ruth crossed her arms. “Doors shook. Water came into the house.”

Her son tugged on her pant leg and she lifted him. “We hid in the bathroom.” Patting his head, she leaned on the balcony to study the island. It was like a furious giant had stomped and clawed the town of Utuado, Puerto Rico. Trees were snapped. Power lines, ripped. Mudslides bled over roads.

“No electricity. No water. All day to get anything done,” she said as she rocked her son. “I don’t think it’s going to get better anytime soon.”

HURRICANE MARIA

The storm fed on heat. Like an angry spirit seeking release, it climbed the sky. Warm. Sluggish. Slow. Hungry for fury. It found more than wind on the ocean. It tasted carbon, the gaseous exhale of civilization.

It fed on the heat spawned by a billion cars and thousands of jets that crossed the planet. Awakened to its power, the storm screamed like a newborn, its 175 mile per hour winds lashed waves upon waves.

Hurricane Maria’s eye opened, seeing a path. This fury, half made by nature, half by man. It violently spun in space, cursed hot breaths of lightning and storm. She drew darkness over the islands as the poor nailed wood over windows, heard of her immensity and said her name over and over ... Maria.

NEW YORK CITY

“Are they safe?” I asked. “Icalled,” Mom said. “But no one picks up the phone.” On screen, a NASA video showed a white foamy spiral around a black hole. Like the sky had been unplugged and all the weight and force of the atmosphere drained into the eye.

Everywhere Hurricane Maria passed went dark and then, slowly, photos surfaced. Dominica. Bahamas. Wrecked. Homes like piles of splinters. Roads cracked. Rivers gushed through the center of town. People digging through wreckage.

It churned over the Caribbean until its dark eye slammed into Puerto Rico and then vanished. An eerie quiet followed. No news came from the island. What happened to our family? What happened to Jesus, my mother’s first cousin? His wife Yeya? Their kids?

“Mom, did you hear anything?” I asked.

“No one answers,” she said again. “They didn’t have much.”

SAN JUAN

As the JetBlue plane turned to the airport, I saw homes with blue tarps for roofs. Trees stripped of leaves. Warehouses, filled with shipping containers. Huge chunks of torn earth. When the wheels hit the runway, we cheered.

Outside the hot, damp air felt like a childhood memory wrapped on skin. It had been 30 years since I was in Puerto Rico. My family fled long ago. My grandfather ran from an abusive father. My grandmother from rural poverty. He died after I was born, glaucoma blinded him by the time I was a baby. He held me regardless, a new life in old hands.

Grandma and I lived here briefly. I spoke Spanish and chased salamanders up the walls. The jungle was my playground. We left, again for New York. My Spanish faded but the childhood joy glowed like an ember.

Growing up, I learned that Puerto Rico was a colony, its people and land stolen and stolen again. Shame replaced memory. I spat Spanish from my mouth. A gulf opened between who I was and who I am that deepened for three decades, until the island was ransacked by a hurricane. I came back to save what I had loved and lost.

Driving around potholes and under dead traffic lights, I saw storm-beaten buildings. The windows looked like bruises. Street signs were folded by the hands of the hurricane.

I found Caritas de Puerto Rico, they welcomed me in, gave me a plate of food and testified to the island’s pain. Danny Rojas, a volunteer, shared how a client, a homeless man, lived on the beach. “He ran for safety as the hurricane ripped roofs off,” he said, eyes wide and unblinking. “The zinc roofs flew through the air like knives. Even now, he can’t sleep. Too traumatized. That’s just one story.”

The staff said Padre Monserrate could see me. We sat at the table and he talked in measured words. I asked about relief efforts. A hundred people a day, came here for food, water and prayer.

“Anyone can come get a meal, water. It was and is still needed. The first days after the hurricane were horrible,” he said. “This generation has seen something they’ve never seen before. They never saw neighbors dying like this. Never saw helicopters having to deliver food. It forced us to care about each other, more.” He tapped his cellphone sarcastically. “We’ve become so individualistic.”

He gave me numbers for churches in Arecibo that delivered aid to towns tucked in the island’s mountains. I left and in the car, got a text from Pablo Borges, an activist friend. We planned to meet at the To Go food store.

Night had come. San Juan was a city of shadows. Passing car lights showed couples or lone men or families in brief portraits. Generators hummed as gasoline musk mixed with the sea breeze. Under fluorescent-lit stores, people charged cell phones and talked but often stopped and looked into the darkness as if trying to see a future.

I parked and met Pablo, young and wiry, a bushy

beard under restive eyes. We went into the store. He grabbed beers and we drank outside as partygoers gathered on the dark sidewalk. Pablo gestured around, “It’s a stateless island. It’s a shock to my mom’s generation, they always thought the feds would take care of them. Corruption? Drugs? The feds would clean it up. Now, they pulled back and we’re on our own.”

Light and shadow took turns between us. Cars passed by, illuminating our faces in mid-sentence. We talked of Puerto Rico. We talked of the weight crushing the island, how the colonial elite had been replaced by a business elite. Anger drove his breath. The beers rose and fell like pendulums in our hands.

“Electricity has been failing for a long time,” he said. “Now this company Whitefish got a multi-million dollar contract to fix our grid and they had only two full-time employees. They’ll hire gringos and none of the money is going to stay here. None. The rich are getting richer and the poor are being left behind.”

He took a swig. “There’s mobilizing going on. Go see Casa Pueblo in Adjuntas, they’ve been fighting the exploitation of Puerto Rico for 30 years.”

AMID THE DEVASTATION, INNUMERABLE ACTS OF KINDNESS

BAYAMÓN

“Jesus y Yeya,” I shouted through the gate. A large woman dressed in a simple gown came from the house. Wincing at stiff knees, she opened it and hugged me. Thirty years apart, crushed by a hug.

She didn’t speak much English. I barely had enough Spanish to say my name right. Or ask directions. I had driven up and down Bayamón looking for a house with a large mango tree. By sheer dumb luck, a guy told me I was one street away. Sure enough, I found it.

She showed me the backyard, the mango tree was chopped down to a nub. The hurricane had broken its branches. Debris littered the yard. They had no generator, no electricity, just relentless heat during the day. Yeya leaned on a chair, squeezed my shoulder and repeated, “Terminado. Terminado.”

Her voice was tear-choked but she waved the grief away. Jesus, my grandmother’s nephew, rolled in on a wheelchair. He had white hair and a stern face. One arm was a twisted claw from a heart attack and he lifted it to hug me. They fed me coffee, crackers and cheese. I told them I was going to the mountains to report on conditions. While they said be careful, I took my phone and dialed mom’s number.

Handing it to Jesus, I saw him press it to his ear as if



NICHOLAS POWERS

he could bring her right to his side. His voice rose and fell over the years separating them. He gave the phone to Yeya who laughed and talked, her eyes dancing in her face. They tied their lives together again and our family story flickered like Christmas lights.

I had to leave. Jesus pressed a “thank you” deep into me. Yeya held my face and kissed my cheeks. I got in the car and saw Jesus had wheeled himself out to the front porch to watch me go.

UTUADO

The muscleman pulled the cables, zipping the shopping cart across the riverbed as a remix of Queen’s “We Will Rock You” blasted from truck speakers. A crew from the radio station Magic 97.3 cheered as they caught it. On the other side, families waved on the ledge of a broken bridge. Massive pieces of it lay on the rocks below.

“There’s 25 families stranded on the other side,” said Zamaris Rodriguez, one of the staff. “No electricity. No water.”

We paused whenever the shopping cart wobbled on cables over the river. Rodriguez had a bullhorn and shouted instructions. Across the chasm, the cart wobbled and then was caught by outreaching hands.

“We come to help,” she said. “This is the first time a hurricane shut down the whole island. We had no nature left. All the cows and chickens died. What food was under the soil made it but everything else was wiped out.”

The house music thumped through the valley. We both bobbed our heads to it. She sheepishly shrugged. “We need to keep our spirits up.” The staff got back into the trucks, Puerto Rican flags fluttering on the hoods as they drove off.

On the other side, people took the supplies home. I peered over the ledge at the pieces of broken bridge, immense blocks of concrete that had been snapped and thrown downstream by raging waters. Here in Utuado, the hurricane descended with primeval force. Breaking. Bending. Smashing.

I walked on a road where homes lay dark, trees ripped up; roots exposed like the tendons of a torn limb. Overhead, power lines spooled from poles. Back at the car, I felt the weight of devastation. My chest was tight. The pain on every face poured into my spirit and the body instinctively tightened to keep it from blurring the mind.

Someone shouted. An older man asked why I parked at the abandoned house. I told him I was a reporter with family in Bayamón. He looked me up and down, went back and came out with coffee, cheese and bread. I was stunned by his kindness.

I drove to Utuado’s center, parked at the National Guard’s office and asked to see the officer in charge. The young men awkwardly pointed at Jorge Nieves, who laughed at his good luck and agreed to talk.

“Everything was destroyed,” he said while pulling up a chair for me. “In the first 10 days, we went on 53 missions and found people with injuries. Some needed oxygen but had no electricity. We got them generators. Airlifted them out.

Dropped off food. We were working 22-hour days.”

I asked him what could have been done better. “The mayor has put security first, health second,” he said. “But every day we see more people with medical needs. There’s a lot of diabetes.” I thought of the cities with no electricity and asked him about Puerto Rico’s future.

He looked away, then back at me. “People are leaving, and it’s going to make it worse. We’re not going to have enough manpower to rebuild. Already, so many on the island are old or disabled or poor.”

He asked me where I was staying. I said in my car. He brought me to the kitchen, gave me plates of food wrapped in aluminum and bottles of water.

Driving away, I looked at the mountain where people lived in the dark. Turning on thin roads that coiled tight, I went up, up, up. On the side were wrecked homes and families talking in the street. A few looked at me suspiciously.

I parked and a pot-bellied man walked toward me as he cleaned a knife. He was scared but tried to hide it. I told him I was a reporter. He put away the blade, called to his friends. One of them said, “We have no electricity, no water. Too many people are leaving. If you have money, you go. The poor have to stay.”

They pointed to Ruth Montero who lived down the street with two boys. I walked over and she checked me out and waved me in. She gave me a tour of the house as her story, spilled out in one big wave. “Here’s where the hurricane tore off my roof,” she said. “Doors shook. Water came into the house.”

One of her sons came by and she picked him up. “We hid in the bathroom. Afterwards, it was so sad. There were no trees. Mudslides everywhere. No exit. We were out of power. I searched for water. People put pipes in the hillside, drank, showered and did laundry. They’re still doing it now.”

We looked out from the balcony. Night had fallen. The hills were black mounds under a purple sky. A few lights shone and people walked by like actors on distant stages. Generators hummed under the symphony of coquis, chirping in the gloam. It was a beauty maybe only briefly visible between bouts of hunger and panic.

She lit a candle. “I was thinking of leaving but I don’t think I can make it. It’s scary to start over. And my parents live next door. But we have to go through a lot to get a little bit of help from the government. The employees at the agency just talk to each other while we wait.”

Her youngest son squirmed in her lap. Her older one rode his three-wheeler in circles in the dark. As she talked, the candle flame wavered and the shadows of the family seemed to jump on the walls as if trying to escape.

“We need help. Trump cut Medicare and it’s less now. We deserve to be treated like U.S. citizens,” she said. I asked what message she wanted to give *The Independent’s* readers. Staring across the table, she said, “We are suffering.”

I got my things to leave, said goodbye, but in the car I looked at the food from the National Guard and at her moving in the window. Getting out, I brought it to her.

Continued on next page



NICHOLAS POWERS

SPECIAL DELIVERY:

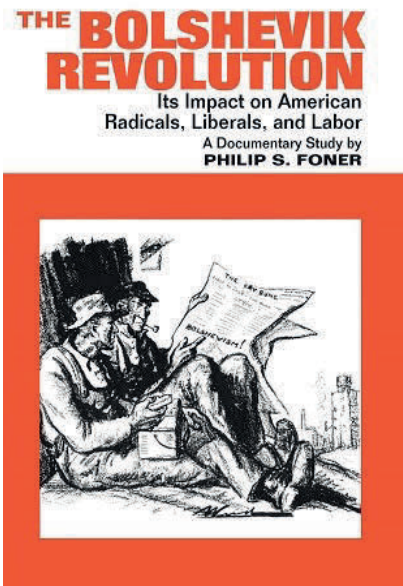
Volunteers in the town of Utuado deliver supplies to 25 families stranded on the other side of a destroyed bridge.

ADAPTING:

A Puerto Rican man bathes in water flowing directly from a mountain stream. The island’s infrastructure was badly damaged by Hurricane Maria including the water system.

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PUERTO RICO

Continued from previous page

ADJUNTAS

"Go ahead." Maribel pointed at the switch. "Turn it on." I did and light beamed down. "It's solar-powered." She proudly pointed at the street lamps of Casa Pueblo. "When the hurricane knocked out the electricity, we still had power." I held my hand under the glow. Weightless. Warm. Free. It was like holding the future.

Hours earlier, I woke up in my car's backseat. I saw deep night. Stars scattered like seeds. Each one a bright grain because Utuado had no power, no light. The island had been thrown back in time's abyss.

Driving to Adjuntas was like being in a submarine as my headlights passed over wreckage. Empty homes. Abandoned cars. Sagging powerlines. Guardrails washed away. Roads crumbled into a cliff drop. In the absence of people, the nightmare future was more visible. Is this Puerto Rico decades from now? An island too hurricane-battered to live on?

By sunrise, I was in Adjuntas and went to Casa Pueblo's big hall where Maribel showed me a photo of the first meeting in 1980 when one man showed up. The next time they threw a party and hundreds came. Casa Pueblo united the people to stop a strip mine that would have stabbed the earth. Then a pipeline that could have spilled poison. Now they drove trucks to nearby towns handing out water and food.

"We want to build more," Maribel said of the prototype street lamp. "Make an industry for the people to have jobs. We can protect the island from climate change."

Someone called to Maribel. Time to take supplies to the towns.

I followed them as they gave water to families. Tension left people's faces as they took the supplies. Laughter. Smiles. Eyes brightened with relief. I realized this glowing gratitude was everywhere on my trip. Innumerable acts of kindness had scattered love like seeds for a future Puerto Rico. It was as if I had woken from a deep night and saw the people themselves were stars.

PONCE

The beach was empty. Storm debris littered the sand. Here was southern Puerto Rico, where hurricanes hurled wind and water at the land. Here's where I played as a child.

Thirty years. Thirty damn years. I'd been gone too long. I waded into the sea and cupped the water as if it was my own blood, felt each wave as if it was my own heartbeat, breathed in the breeze as if it was my breath. The trees were my bones. The sand, my skin. The leaves, my hair. The island had poured so much into me that it had become my larger body.

I lay on the waves as clouds darkened the sky. They foretold all the other storms to come. How much time do we have before gigantic hurricanes drive everyone to the

mainland? Can we strengthen the island? Can we survive a changing Earth?

And aren't millions being forced to ask these questions? Families fled cyclones in Asia. They fled drought in Africa. They fled fires in the American West. The farther they traveled, the more they looked back to the land that was like their own flesh and blood.

BAYAMÓN

"Señora," I called as Yeya walked out and smiled painfully at knees, still sore. She shook her finger at me.

"Señorita," she made a mischievous eye-twinkle. We laughed. Jesus wheeled over. I told them about the bridge, Casa Pueblo and the beach. They listened, catching my glow more than my words. I said it was time to get a generator and that the family could pitch in.

I unfolded cash and asked Jesus to take it. He shook his head. Yeya looked at him knowingly and took it for him. Neighbors came by. Upon learning who I was, they asked, "New York? What are you doing here?" I told them of the trip. And they nodded politely, not wanting to relive their hurricane night.

I got up to leave and Yeya gave me her phone number. Jesus embraced me for a long time as if to say, in case you don't make it back before I die, I love you. She kissed my forehead as if to say, you are my other son.

Hours later, I stood at the airport. One by one passengers showed their ID to the agent, turned and waved goodbye to weeping relatives. My eyes burned wet. My throat locked. I wanted to stay and rebuild the island. But I had a full life waiting for me in New York. When the time came, I held out my ID to the agent too.

THE NEXT STORM

From the plane I studied the sky and knew the next hurricane was already being spoon-fed. The exhaust from this plane and all planes and cars, factories and farms were heating the oceans. In a year, another hurricane season will begin, another angry spirit will spin, slow and blind at first, then faster and faster until its eye opens.

It will careen through the Caribbean, bouncing off islands. It will shriek 100 miles per hour plus winds. It will lash homes, blast bridges and blow rivers off course. It will blow human lives off course.

People will stumble into a quiet morning of devastation. And face life or death. Modern civilization has turned the Earth against us. Death is here now. Death is chasing us inland. Death is forcing us from home. Life means a revolution against a system that has been embedded in us for hundreds of years.

We have to make a choice. I leaned close to the window. The shadow of the plane rippled on the clouds.

HAUTE CUISINE

Continued from page 9

pastry chef.

Allison giggled. It was the first bit of humanity and laughter I had seen from her, or anyone really, all evening. “I went to Notre Dame to study English, I thought I wanted to be a teacher but here I am.” She laughed some more. I caught her eye and we laughed together — a moment of respite from the busy evening.

Chef Dan Kluger came downstairs. “How’s the night going, kid? They feeding you or what?”

Chef Dan is a massive bald man with a big, joyful demeanor. Born and raised in the Bronx, he named his restaurant after the street his father grew up on. His persona resonated through the kitchen and service. Although in Loring Place, like all high-end restaurant kitchens runs on militaristic discipline, no one shouted abuse at one another. Uncommonly, there were plenty of women in the kitchen too, probably a 60:40 ratio of women to men. The calm kitchen and its gender equanimity seemed to have a positive effect on the food itself.

• • •

“The temperament of that kitchen comes from me,” Chef

Floyd Cardoz told me in the middle of service at Paowalla, explaining that Dan Kluger of Loring Place trained under him for five years. It was my last shift of the week and I was exhausted, ready to go home. Floyd was impressed that I had the gumption to step into three different kitchens without any experience, even if I wasn’t sure that it was what I wanted to do. It reminded him of himself, he said. He had no experience when he started. He’d been on track to become a doctor when he realized medicine wasn’t his calling, so he dropped out of college to attend culinary school; first in Bombay, India, and later in Bluche, Switzerland. “My parents thought I was crazy but look where I am now,” Floyd said.

Per his life story, the bottom of all of Floyd’s emails contain this cliché but fitting Robert Frost quote:

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

To my surprise, after a series of quick-fire questions — What the best thing I had ever eaten? (My mom’s roast potatoes.) Why did I want to work in a kitchen? (I love food.) What I liked about Paowalla? (The Cheese Kulcha.) What I didn’t? (The stuffy kitchen.) — Chef Floyd offered me a job. Because I was inexperienced he would start me off at \$11 an hour. He would work with me a lot

personally and from that he said I would be able to gain invaluable experience.

I was flattered at the offer. When I got home after my shift, I sat at my desk, exhausted, staring into space. I couldn’t think of much — other than how much discipline I needed to gain. Was I deserving enough to join the thankless who dwell — day by day, night by night — in the claustrophobic, cramped surroundings of New York’s bustling kitchens, churning out haute cuisine until closing time finally comes along; this poorly paid army toiling at a job where benefits are scant and a social life impossible, all for the love of food and a sense of belonging?

I sent Floyd an email the next day thanking him for the offer. I wasn’t ready to join the cult of the kitchen, I explained. I do, however, look forward to eating at his restaurant one of these days.

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STILL SUBVERSIVE (AFTER ALL THESE YEARS)

PUNK TURNS 40

BY PETER RUGH

Believe it or not, it's been 40 years since punk exploded; 40 years since *Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols*. The album was an October Revolution of sorts, hitting record store shelves in Britain on the 28th of that month, but, as with Red October, pressure had been building for months, years even.

There was the release of the Sex Pistols' first single the year before, "Anarchy in the U.K.," which opens with "vocalist" Johnny Rotten declaring himself the anti-Christ, plotting the downfall of the nation and mocking capitalism over Steve Jones' growling guitar and Paul Cook's pounding drums. Then came the band's appearance on the Thames Television program "Today" that December, during which Jones called the stuffily condescending host, Bill Grundy, a "fucking rotter" live on air.

With bands like the Ramones, and the New York Dolls before them, punk had been brewing amid the urban decay of 1970s New York before the Pistols came along, but the Brits gave the genre what would come to be its defining attitude, one of complete distaste for respectability and pretension.

"God Save the Queen" is a punk manifesto if ever there was one. "We're the flowers in the dustbin," Rotten screams. "We're the poison in the human machine. We're the future, your future."

Rotten later reflected on the dustbin those flowers sprouted from. Britain was "completely run-down with trash on the streets, and total unemployment — just about everybody was on strike," he said. "Everybody was brought up with an education system that told you point blank that if you came from the wrong side of the tracks ... then you had no hope in hell and no career prospects at all."

Right off the bat on "God Save the Queen," Rotten proclaims Elizabeth II "ain't no human being." The song climbed nearly to the top of singles charts on the eve of the Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee. It was a symbolic dethroning, stripping Her Majesty of the reverence blindly afforded to her by her loyal subjects.

At his Soho shop in London, Pistols manager Malcolm McLaren sold t-shirts designed by artist Jamie Reid, featuring the Queen's face mutilated by a safety pin through her lips. The appropriation of what was up until then a symbol of domesticity could be read as a sexist attack on patriarchy or a feminist takedown of the English conception of the feminine.

McLaren and Reid were students of Situationism — a French hybrid of Gramscian Marxism and the surrealism that sought to disrupt cultural hegemony through art. With slogans like "Be realistic, demand the impossible" and "Under the pavement lies the beach," the art movement rose to prominence for its propagandistic influence on the general strike that had rocked France nine years earlier.

The Pistols never toted a political line. Rather, the nihilistic image they projected generated a shocking spectacle that opened up a space for questioning so-

cial norms, even if the band members themselves — perhaps with the exception of Rotten — never gave much of a thought to the theory behind the spectacle itself. They were working-class kids, relishing the opportunity to spit the face of society. Call it political rudeness that — as David Ensminger, author of *The Politics of Punk: Protest and Revolt from the Streets*, put it to me recently — "highlighted the fissures in the social strata."

Listening to *Never Mind the Bullocks* today, it is still as raw and, for the most part, funny as ever, despite the fact that many of social mores the band transgressed have long since dissipated. The treatment of mental illness and abortion on "Bodies" actually makes the band come across as conservative by today's standards.

Paul Cook was in town in October, promoting a new musical venture he's launched with his former Pistols' bandmate Steve Jones. I mentioned how the Sex Pistols' caustic approach to publicity seems to have been revived by our commander-in-chief, Donald Trump.

"You've got yourself a punk president," Cook said.

Yet Ensminger cautions against a singular interpretation of what defines punk. "You could say, 'Punks are assholes and [Trump's] an asshole' or 'Punks are repugnant and he's repugnant.' But you could also say, 'Obama is punk because he's black and he's breaking through the [White House] color barrier.'"

There are "multiple competing truths about what punk is, ideologically speaking," Ensminger elaborated. "But most of us would probably want to believe at least that, over 40 years, it has provided a personal, urgent and permanent counter-narrative to monoculture, hegemony, 'the powers that be' — this voice of dissent coming from a community that is democratic, participatory. Punks are anti-authoritarian, whether it's the church, the state, the business, the school. And it's an immersive DIY experience, where a lot of it is about being hands-on, doing it yourself, whether it is alone or within a community."

The descendants of 1977 — the Dead Kennedys in San Francisco and Minor Threat in Washington, D.C., to cite just the tip of the iceberg — explored the terrain the Pistols opened up, developing a punk ethos within emergent underground scenes that sprouted up in their respective cities.

Punk took rock and roll back to the basics. Anyone who knew three chords and had two friends could grab a cheap guitar and form a punk band. Inspired by seeing the Pistols perform, Joe Strummer formed the Clash. The band melded punk with reggae and funk, hybridizations that Rage Against the Machine and others later built on.

Punk's culture of participation extended to political fronts. Activist collectives like Positive Force in Washington, D.C., emerged from punk scenes. Throughout the eighties and up to the present, money raised at punk shows from Tokyo to Los Angeles has funded women's shelters, fed the homeless, renovated disused buildings and supported antiwar campaigns. The commercial success of the British punk

band Chumbawamba in the early 2000s went toward funding the global Indymedia network, of which this newspaper is a byproduct.

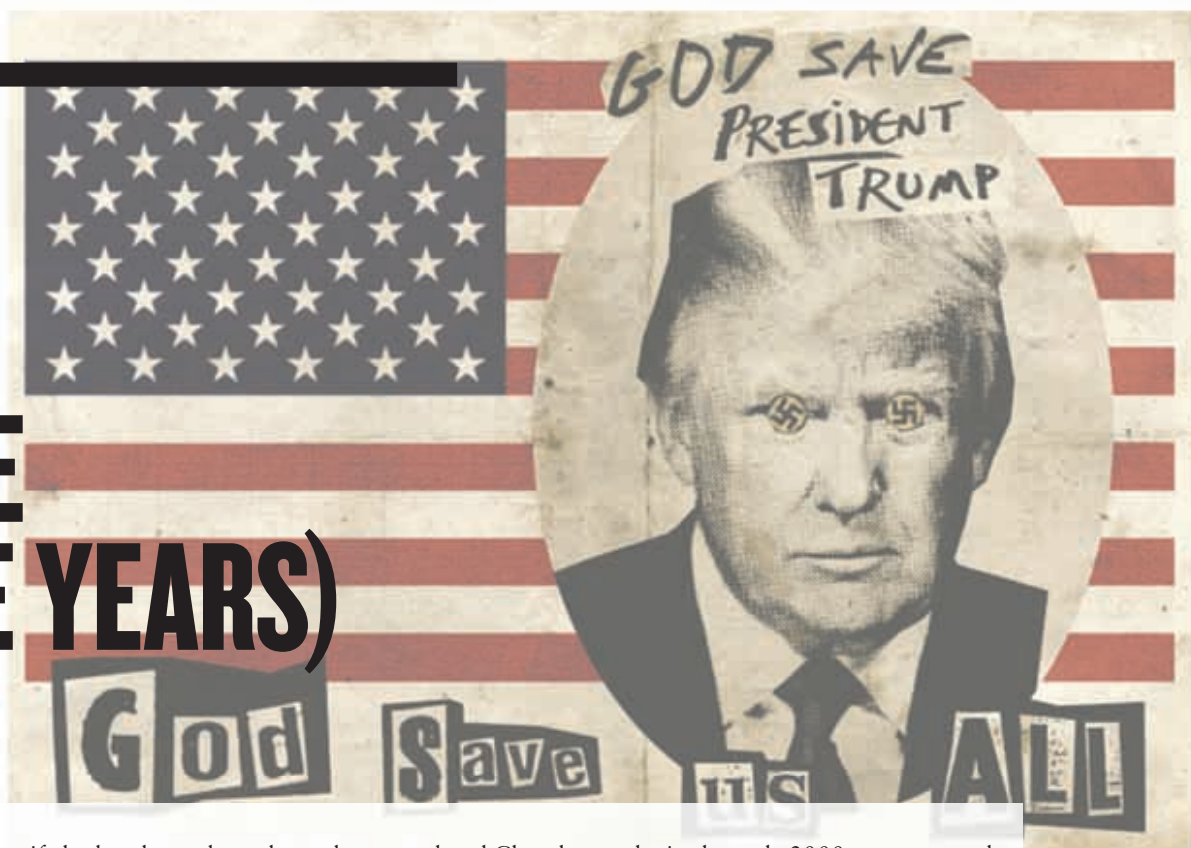
Some have contended that punk is at heart conservative, that it represents a retreat from prog rock and other forms of musical experimentation prevalent in the 1970s. But avant-garde punk bands like Pere Ubu trouble that interpretation. The distaste for respectability politics that the Sex Pistols' helped promulgate is visible today on Trump's Twitter account and in numerous "alt-right" Pepe memes. But it can likewise be spotted on the nascent dirtbag left, whose exponents have argued for embracing vulgarity as a political tactic rather than letting right-wingers like Rush Limbaugh have all the fun.

There has always been a tension within punk between a rejection of the dominant culture — what Marxists call the superstructure — and a desire to transform it. "You have to scale up if you want to make huge social changes," Ensminger said. "But the Black Panthers weren't huge and they made an enormous change to both popular and political culture. La Raza, the same thing. Dedicated subcultures really can make large impacts."

Will punk last another 40 years?

"We're always going to want to return to punk," said Ensminger. "It embodies the primal qualities we desire. Punk speaks to all the individual trauma you are experiencing and allows you, with minimal effort, to participate in a response to it; whether it is creating a fanzine out of nothing or a blog, or learning two or three notes and the next thing you know you are up on stage. You go from someone being passive to someone who is a creator. It lowers the bar for participation, so you can jump into and stir up culture."

A longer version of this article was published in October at indypendent.org. Follow Peter Rugh on Twitter @JohnReedsTomb.



GOD SAVE US ALL (2017), JAMIE REID

MUSIC

MAVIS' MEDICINE FOR THE SOUL

If All I Was Was Black
BY MAVIS STAPLES
ANTI-RECORDS, 2017

By Brady O'Callahan

“It's time for more love.” At least Mavis Staples seems to think so.

It's been a little over a year since Donald Trump elected President and I, at least, think reasons to be happy are few and far between. Everyone on both sides is rehashing and relitigating the 2016 election. We can't agree on much, except that we all can't believe we're where we are. I feel as if every piece I've written or read in the past few months has included the phrase “in a country so divided.” How do we make it out of this crisis? Hell, how do we make it out of 2017?

“I've got love to give and it's time for more love,” Staples sings.

“Thank God for Mavis,” I say to myself.

A gospel and R&B legend, Staples has been performing for more than 60 years. Bob Dylan called her singing voice “the most mysterious thing I'd ever heard” and proposed to marry her in the mid-1960s. She and her family were also close with Dr. Martin Luther King and Staples' connections to the civil rights movement make her latest album that much more poignant.

With *If All I Was Was Black* she once again plants her flag in the resistance. Written and produced by Jeff Tweedy of the bands Wilco and Tweedy, the album is a unique entry in the growing list of recent artistic expressions of dissent. It doesn't come across as particularly angry. It doesn't name names or point fingers. It proposes resistance through love and understanding.

“We Go High” borrows its central phrase from Michelle Obama's famous speech. Staples proclaims, “I know they don't know what they're doing when they tell their lies, spread around rumors. I know they're still human and they need my love.”

The songs on this album probably aren't going to reach the ears of anyone who didn't walk away from Michelle's speech with a sense of hope. Staples is trying to reach the people who align with her politics.

She wants to talk them off the ledge. This won't be the album that unites us. Rather, it's a gentle urging to liberals and lefties to reach out and try to bring our conservative brethren up to speed.

Nowhere is this more resounding than the standout track “Build a Bridge.” Staples mourns the fact that in a country so divided, we sequester ourselves: “I'm tired of us living so lonely.” And she presents a seemingly impossible solution. “Gonna build a bridge right over the ocean, so you can walk right over to me,” she sings, her voice elevated by a supporting chorus in an arrangement that seems to indicate this will require a group effort.


Tweedy does a fantastic job showcasing Staples' voice throughout the album. The instrumentation adds only what is needed. And though Staples' pipes aren't as powerful as they used to be, her spirit is as fierce as ever. Make no mistake here: Staples is the star of the show.

If *If All I Was Was Black* lacks the punch of recent albums that tackle politics head on, name names and make enemies, that's because this album doesn't care much for punching. It's good medicine, even if I can't tell whether it is meant to heal us or no-vocaine to overcome the pain.

Maybe it's both.

By omitting any real specifics about our current grievances, Staples adds a certain nuance and timelessness to these songs. Staples is 78 years old and the problems confronting us today are older. There's something remarkable about someone who is still willing to show up, time and time again, to try harder as Staples does here. What excuse do we have?

CHARLYNE ALEXIS



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A GREEK TRAGEDY FORETOLD

Adults in the Room: My Battle with the European and American Deep Establishment

BY YANIS VAROUFAKIS

FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX, 2017

And The Weak Suffer What They Must?

BY YANIS VAROUFAKIS

NATION BOOKS, 2016

By Bennett Baumer

Along with French economist Thomas Piketty, former Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis is making economics sexy again. Journalists enjoyed snapping photos of Varoufakis, clad in a black leather coat, commuting to the finance ministry's offices on his Yamaha motorcycle. But his short tenure in the Greek government was marked by clashes with the country's creditors and ultimately with the leadership of Syriza, the left-wing party that came to power in Greece in early 2015.

Varoufakis, a self-described "erratic Marxist," also happens to be a gifted storyteller who can deftly relate personal experiences to larger themes without sacrificing analytical rigor. It's not something you would expect to find in your average finance minister, but he is no ordinary government bureaucrat.

He opens *Adults in the Room*, his memoir about his short time in government, by describing a late-night meeting in a Washington bar in which former U.S. Treasury Secretary Larry Summers asks him if he would behave as an insider or outsider. It is a sly narrative construct, as Varoufakis tells all from the outsider-insider perspective and recounts the negotiations over Greece's debt with the "Troika": the International Monetary Fund, the European Commission and the European Central Bank (ECB).

Varoufakis names the individual actors in the Greek tragedy, but where he really shines is in explaining the central economic and political forces that created Europe's economic crisis.

Greece's population is 10.75 million but its public debt is around 330 billion euros (\$390 billion). He argues that Greece is in a modern-day debtor's prison and cannot pay its sovereign debt without a serious restructuring. *Adults in the Room* takes pains to describe his attempts to end the country's "fiscal waterboarding" at the hands of the Troika. Varoufakis demanded new debt terms and some debt cancellation — "haircuts" for the banks and other institutions that held Greece's bonds. One problem was that the ECB's charter explicitly prohibited debt cancellation and bailouts, thus stacking the deck against the debtor nation.

Once in power, Varoufakis got creative. He offered to convert Greece's unsustainable debt payments to perpetual bonds that paid lower but perpetual interest, and the country would be able to choose when to pay off the principal, sometime in

the distant future. Another novel but workable idea was that Greece would swap its largest debt obligations for new 30-year bonds that had crucial provisions: Annual payments would be suspended until Greece's national income increased, and would then be linked to its economic growth.

It would have been a win-win solution for both sides, but the Troika rejected all of Varoufakis' proposals. It held the upper hand: It could close Greece's banks and turn off the liquidity spigot. Varoufakis wanted Greece to play hardball and default on its ECB debt if that happened. He was convinced German Chancellor Angela Merkel did not want to force Greece to leave the Eurozone, the 19-nation group that shares a common European currency. He believed a "Grexit" would have spurred a stampede out of the Eurozone by other debtor countries like Italy, Spain and Portugal. However, the Syriza government lost its nerve and did not default. The chapter "Lions Led By Donkeys" details what happened when the Troika shut Greece's banks down and the Syriza government capitulated.

Adults in the Room unflatteringly portrays Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and how he cracked in the face of intense diplomatic pressure, bank closures and the threat of being kicked out of the Eurozone. When Tsipras agreed to impose a new round of austerity on his country in order to procure a new loan from the Troika, Varoufakis resigned and sped away on his motorcycle. He was finance minister for just five and a half months.

Readers should pair *Adults in the Room* with Varoufakis' *And The Weak Suffer What They Must?*

The title of the latter is derived from an infamous scene in the Greek historian Thucydides' recounting of the Peloponnesian War, in which the Athenians demand that their weaker rivals unconditionally surrender or else face complete annihilation, because "the strong do as they like while the weak suffer what they must." More than 2,000 years later, Varoufakis contends, this same merciless logic can be found in today's neoliberal global economy. He does us the favor of showing us how we came to this moment.

In his retelling, the United States shifted in the 1970s from an industrial powerhouse that ran large trade surpluses to a debtor nation, within which economic and political power shifted from industrialists to Wall Street.

"The trick for America to gain the power to recycle other countries' surpluses... was to persuade foreign capitalists to voluntarily send their capital to Wall Street," he writes. Wall Street offered high returns on investment in the form of higher inter-

est rates to attract Japanese, German and eventually Chinese capital. Higher interest rates meant American manufacturers' costs jumped and consumer purchasing power nosedived.

Then the party stopped with the financial crash of 2008. Varoufakis thinks the United States can no longer effectively manage the global economy. The Great Recession decimated Americans' already stagnant incomes, so they do not have the purchasing power to absorb surpluses and recycle money that they did in previous generations.

Varoufakis warns that unstable, debt-ridden countries are a breeding ground for fascism. While Greece's neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party is hobbled by murder trials and corruption charges, elsewhere the far right is capitalizing on economic insecurity by blaming immigrants for society's problems.

Varoufakis, like Piketty, advocates a federal European Union system that would socialize debts, stabilize debtor countries' economic growth and democratize the EU bureaucracy. After his stint as finance minister, he came away convinced that no one country by itself could successfully challenge

MODERN ORACLE:

Former Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis.

AN OUTSIDER'S TALE OF CRASHING THE ULTIMATE INSIDERS' CLUB

Europe's powers that be. He cofounded DiEM25 (Democracy in Europe Movement 2025) — "a pan-European, democratic, humanist movement" — that seeks to transform the European project while preventing it from sliding into a 21st century version of fascism.

It won't be an easy task. But from his writing, it is clear Varoufakis knows exactly who and what he is up against.

WEB EXCLUSIVE

The Greek debt crisis, the future of Europe, Trump's tax cuts, the rise of far right movements around the world amid deepening economic inequality and more. Check out Bennett Baumer's interview with Yanis Varoufakis at indypendent.org.



MARC LOZANO

COASTAL CITIES ON THE EDGE

Extreme Cities: The Peril and Promise of Urban Life in the Age of Climate Change
By ASHLEY DAWSON
VERSO, 2017

By Nancy Romer

The U.S. environmental movement has often historically put “cities” in opposition to “nature.” Yet over half the world’s population now lives in cities, and the natural disasters of the last several years have shown how extreme weather can be most devastating to the urban poor—Hurricane Katrina drowning elderly people in New Orleans—and how the social inequality intensifies that, like Hurricane Maria devastating a Puerto Rico hobbled by debt and a shaky electrical-power infrastructure.

In *Extreme Cities: The Peril and Promise of Urban Life in the Age of Climate Change*, Ashley Dawson asserts that while cities are the sites of the most greenhouse-gas emissions, “it is in the extreme city that the most important struggles for human survival will take place.” He defines “extreme city” as an urban space where extreme economic and political inequality threaten its own sustainability. How a city copes with that “has everything to do with how well it will weather the storms that are bearing down upon humanity.”

While we know about the dire predictions of rising temperatures, acidification of the oceans, melting glaciers and polar ice, and rising waters, why don’t we talk about this existential threat more often? Dawson suggests that be-

cause there is so much global wealth centered in cities and invested in urban real estate, those in economic and political power do not want the rest of us to talk about what is about to happen. He believes we will inevitably be forced to retreat from the coastal and riverine cities and resettle inland.

Extreme Cities is well-researched and accessibly written. Its main focus is New York City, primarily as a case study of the effects of climate change and the social movements responding to it. He weaves in experiences and experiments from other cities, but always returns to Gotham’s history and future.

The vast majority of major world cities have been built next to water — oceans, rivers, deltas and lakes — and if global warming melts the polar icecaps, sea levels could rise as much as 50 feet over the next century. Dawson deftly shows us how building hard barriers against rising water is doomed to fail, that we need to work with, not against, the natural systems around us and understand that water must go somewhere, and the land must be replenished with residue that the water can bring back to the shore. He compares cities in Holland, which are recognizing this, with Louisiana, where with fossil-fuel barons controlling the state and local governments, the coast is shrinking because the wetlands and marshlands that historically protected the land from floods have been destroyed for oil drilling and shipping.

Dawson takes a critical but respectful view of Occupy Sandy, the grass-

roots community-support effort that morphed out of Occupy Wall Street when Superstorm Sandy hit New York City in 2012. Occupy Sandy attempted to rebuild homes and support communities, particularly in the Rockaways. But while thousands of people responded to the call for help, like the city school food-service workers who volunteered to serve meals to the hundreds of people sleeping on cots in high-school gyms, he also shows how these loving attempts at help can feed into the hands of governments that have little or no interest in addressing the underlying issues that create both climate change and the inequality that exacerbates its effects. He points to the solidarity of groups that are part of the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance, the Alliance for a Just Rebuilding and to other grassroots efforts to give decision-making and resource-allocating power to the people in our most affected communities.

On the fifth anniversary of Hurricane Sandy, thousands of New Yorkers rallied and marched to demand immediate action on climate justice. Their demands fit neatly into Dawson’s paradigm: Get Sandy victims back in their homes, repair public housing, stop building on waterfronts, retrofit all large buildings to reduce emissions, create good union jobs in the renewable economy, divest all public pension funds from fossil-fuel stocks, systematically get to 100 percent renewable energy by 2050, levy a pollution (or carbon) tax to pay for climate projects, have public ownership of renewable energy grids and enable a full and just recovery for Puerto Rico.

These are preliminary answers to the complex questions of how to deal with catastrophic climate chaos. Ultimately, Dawson states, the problem is capitalism. It is a system that seeks profits above all. That means it has no regard for the natural environment, requires constant growth, dumps its toxic residues in poor communities and communities of color and resists planning and regulation — and it cannot correct itself.

Dawson looks toward the efforts of “energy democracy” or nationalization of renewable energy, and advocates for the developed nations that caused climate change to pay a “climate debt” to developing nations so they don’t have to add further destruction to our planet in order to feed their people. His is a utopian vision of shared interests, of interdependence of communities and peoples, of the joy of communities and working toward the common good. He would ask us to keep those coalitions intact in order to grow our shared power, to keep getting the people most affected to make the decisions needed for our common futures and to shift the balance of power to the people and away from capitalist control.

Can we do that? Short of that transformation of political activism and will, short of system change, we will be victims of our own lethargy in the face of climate chaos.



NILBAM MARTIN

CHARAS

Continued from page 7

liani and Bloomberg administrations’ lax oversight of developers.

“He didn’t realize that he had a community and a body of supporters who were watchdogs,” she says.

Singer doesn’t want to sell it. “He remains eager to begin the lawful development of P.S. 64,” his public-relations firm, Gotham Government Relations (GGR), said in a statement. “The East Village has changed in the 20 years since P.S. 64 was sold. The original group that occupied the building has no presence in today’s community.”

GGR associate Nicole Silver said 950 people from the neighborhood had signed a petition supporting the dorm. She said she would email it to *The Indy*, but never did.

GGR has represented Donald Trump since 2010. When he

announced his presidential campaign in June 2015, it hired a subcontractor for “administrative support” — which, according to an email obtained by the *Hollywood Reporter*, consisted of paying actors \$50 a head to cheer and wear pro-Trump T-shirts.

If the Charas people got the space back, they would like to use it in the same way it was before — a mix of artists’ studios and rehearsal spaces, community nonprofit offices, classes and as a place for meetings, performances and benefits. Rents in the neighborhood have gotten so expensive that it’s next to impossible to find space for any of these purposes, they say.

“I don’t see any reason to change,” says Garcia.

Renovating the 110,000-square-foot five-story building would be a massive job. Singer’s PR firm says it would cost \$60 million. Completely rebuilding ABC No Rio, a four-story building slightly less than one-tenth as big, will cost more than \$8 million.

The sad thing, says Howard, is that before Charas was

sold, it was on the verge of getting city funding to renovate the building. That could have been done for less than \$1 million. But with Singer having stripped its interior, she says, “now we’re looking at a complete gut renovation.”

Councilmember Mendez has asked for a meeting with the mayor’s office to discuss what to do next, but hasn’t heard back yet, says press secretary John Blasco. The mayor’s office declined to comment.

“The center has to be open to the community. The sooner the better,” says Garcia. “We’ve got people who’ve been involved with the project for 40 to 50 years and people who are fresh. It’s going to be beautiful.”

Steven Wishnia performed at Charas with the rock’n’roll bands *False Prophets* and *Gateria*.

KILLED BY CAPITALISM

The Hamlet Fire: A Tragic Story of Cheap Food, Cheap Government and Cheap Lives

By BRYANT SIMON
NEW PRESS, 2017

By Steven Sherman

In 1991, a fire at a chicken-processing factory in Hamlet, North Carolina killed 25 workers. While briefly a national-news story, it soon disappeared from the collective consciousness. Now, over 25 years later, Temple University historian Bryant Simon has written a book, *The Hamlet Fire: A Tragic Story of Cheap Food, Cheap Government, and Cheap Lives*, that uses the story of the fire to illuminate the human (and animal) costs of the direction American society has taken since the 1970. It is a magisterial work that lives up to the challenge.

The book begins with a harrowing account of the fire itself. According to Simon, many people in Hamlet lay the blame for the tragedy on owner Emmett Roe and his son Brad, who relocated from Pennsylvania when they purchased the Imperial Food Products factory. Although the Roes do not come off well, the book is basically a refutation of the idea that blame can be neatly placed on a couple of venal individuals.

Simon's narrative is organized around the contrast between two phases of capitalism, which he summarizes with two words — “more” and “cheap.” (More academically minded readers would use “Fordism” and “neoliberalism.”) During the phase of “more,” beginning with the New Deal of the 1930s, the government worked to insure demand for goods by taking measures to keep employment high and creating a social safety net. Consequently, wages tended to rise.

In the era of “cheap,” beginning roughly in the 1970s, government took measures to ensure that businesses could produce goods as cheaply as possible. The resultant drop in wages was somewhat offset by the resultant cheap prices of goods. Simon's history offers a multisided, close look at the consequences of the “cheap” regime in a particular time and place.

Simon paints a golden age in Hamlet's history in the time of more. The small town, near the South Carolina border about halfway between Charlotte and Fayetteville, was a key transportation hub for railroads and had thousands of union jobs servicing trains, mostly held by white men. As a result, many working people were able to enjoy something like a middle-class lifestyle. Women largely worked in their homes raising kids. That golden age was more dross for African Americans, who were mostly excluded from this prosperity, although there were some railroad workers and a small middle class of professionals. That unions were for a time powerful in this North Carolina town is one of a number of revelations that unsettles familiar clichés about the South.

The good times didn't last forever, as the railroads were superseded by highways. The number of good jobs shrunk, never to return. Instead, Hamlet became one of countless places competing to attract any sort of workplace, a rural

ghetto where the barriers to escape to a more prosperous future were steep. It managed to get the Roes, who in the 1980s were looking to move their chicken factory away from the more unionized and regulated environment of Pennsylvania.

North Carolina aggressively marketed itself as a place welcome to such businesses. Its union density and average wage were the lowest in the country. In fact, it became the most industrialized state in the nation on a per capita basis in this way. Ironically, the increased participation of women and African Americans in the paid labor force, an accomplishment of progressive social movements, helped make labor even cheaper.

Although Roe had practiced some forms of paternal management and civic engagement in Pennsylvania, he never bothered to do so in Hamlet. In fact, he never even put up a sign on the factory advertising what was being produced inside. He didn't bother applying for the required permits to remake the factory, nor did he follow all the procedures required regarding the considerable amount of water needed to operate the chicken factory. Roe did not bother to register his business in North Carolina, which might have led to someone noticing his poor safety record in Pennsylvania. None of this seemed to matter much to authorities at the time.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture frequently inspected the Hamlet factory, but strictly for food safety. It showed little interest in the blatant endangerment of workers — loose wires and such — so long as it did not affect the food. Roe received help from local employment agencies in finding single women with children as workers. They were the workers most likely to fear losing their jobs, and thus the least likely to complain.

The chicken produced was also part of the system of cheap. Industrially produced and processed chicken, turned into nuggets and tenders, emerged as the cheapest way to turn grain into protein. It was easy to prepare and consume, crucial for people who no longer had the time to prepare more elaborate meals for their families. Loaded with fillers and encased in fat, sugar and salt, these chicken products helped contribute to obesity in many with few dietary options. This made it possible to portray them as moral failures. Simon writes graphically about the consequences of the drive to cheapen the product both for chickens and the farmers who grew them.

Squeezing out every last cent for profit also put intensifying pressure on the Roes. An expansion plan failed, leading to a mountain of debt, which resulted in renewed pressure on the workers inside the Hamlet factory in the months before the fire.

The federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) failed to protect the workers. Simon documents the way the law that created OSHA was flawed from the start. It gave states discretion about how they enforced it, so states like North Carolina watered it down. Nothing resembling the regime of surprise inspections needed to keep factory owners honest emerged.

In the wake of the fire, numerous lawsuits were filed, some of which resulted in some money being directed toward survivors. But it was not more than a drop in the bucket compared to what was actually needed to heal the trauma. Simon compares the aftermath of the Hamlet fire to the Triangle Shirtwaist fire of 100 years ago. (At both Hamlet and Triangle, many workers were trapped because the owners had locked exits from the outside to prevent theft.) Hamlet drew national media attention and resulted in some beefing up of OSHA in North Carolina, but it was

USDA INSPECTORS SHOWED LITTLE INTEREST IN THE SAFETY OF WORKERS.

nothing like the workplace-safety and pro-union efforts catalyzed by Triangle, which bore fruit in the New Deal.

This is a great book. Even six years after Occupy, the horrors of working-class life illuminated here remain largely hidden. But since *The Hamlet Fire's* publication in September, it has received only limited attention. One can only hope that professors of sociology and related areas discover it, since it conveys many of the concepts they grapple with in vivid, jargon-free prose. It is a book all Americans should be studying and learning from, as we continue to live in the world of cheap food, cheap government and cheap lives.

THE HAMLET FIRE

A TRAGIC STORY OF
CHEAP FOOD,
CHEAP GOVERNMENT,
AND CHEAP LIVES

BRYANT SIMON

REVEREND BILLY'S TRUMP HELP HOTLINE

Dear Reverend Billy,
I can't believe it's been one year since Trump was elected. It feels like we fell through a collective wormhole into an alternate universe. The Women's March in January was very encouraging, but since then the resistance seems to have petered out — at least it doesn't feel like it has the same momentum it did in the beginning. Do you have any shreds of hope to offer?

— Burt, Greenpoint

Well, Burt, the date on your letter precedes the November 7 elections, the triumph of Jenny Durkan, an out lesbian, in the Seattle mayor's race and of Danica Roem, a transgender person, who was elected to the House of Delegates in Virginia. Ravinder Bhalla is now the Sikh mayor of Hoboken. Andrea Jenkins, the Minneapolis City Council-bound winner, is the first black transgender woman elected to public office in the United States. Maybe she can get the killer of Philando Castile into prison.

Point is: Many of the get-out-the-voters in this revolution attended their local Women's March. They got the lesson taught by the millions of people with hand-made pussy caps on that January day: the future is all of us and the future is now.

These wins are a glorious first step, but the trouble is that they are Democrats. That party has a crisis going on. Is it the party of Wall

Street bankers or is it the party of all of us? The big banks are financing climate change, gentrification and war. With your impatience, Burt, you're saying that "the resistance seems to have petered out" just as this new generation is beginning to etch its way into office. It won't be so easy to kick the offshore 1 percenters out of their posts, but this year's elections were a start. Let's roll up our sleeves and get to work, because we have a long way to go.

— REV. BILLY

• • •

Dear Reverend Billy,
My son took a knee the other day before his middle school basketball game. Personally, I don't even know why they play the anthem to begin with but I'm a little bit concerned about the way some of the other parents reacted. Some of them actually scolded my son in front of me and I was more than a tad peeved that the coach didn't stand up for my child. My son loves basketball and all his friends are on the team, but I'm concerned for his mental wellbeing. I saw that you took a knee at a protest at Trump Tower and thought you might have a suggestion.

— Shantel, Long Island

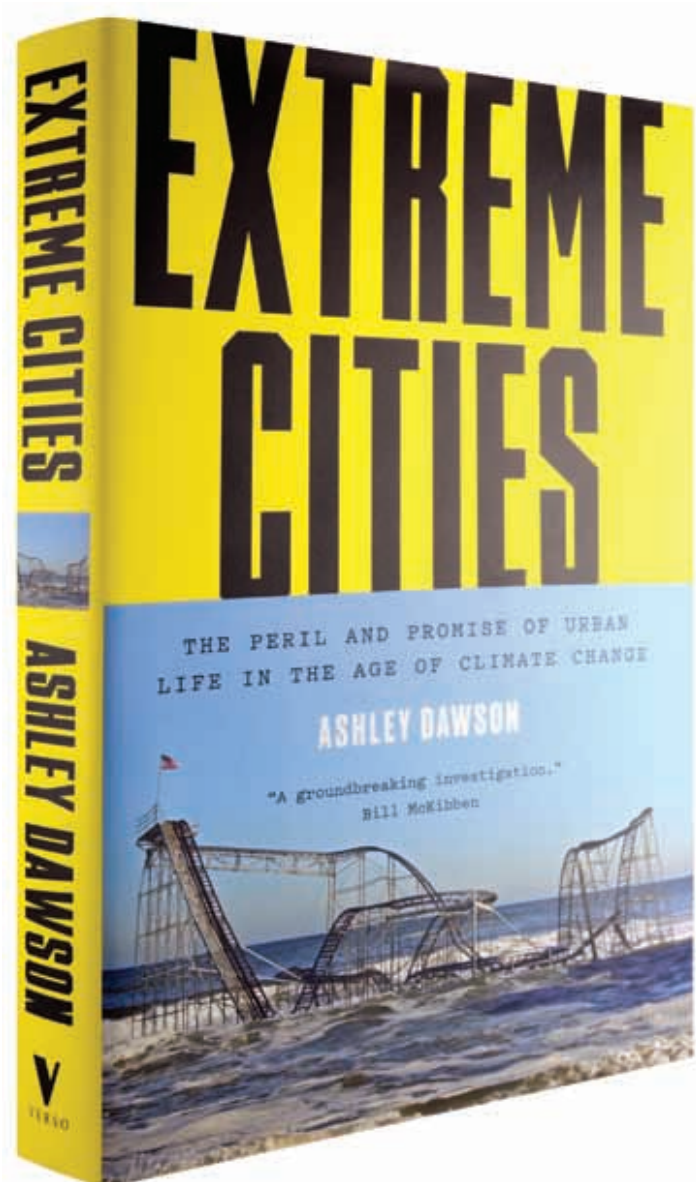
DEAR SHANTEL,
First of all, congratulations to your son. Did he take the knee all by himself? This bodes well for his future — he's got what it takes! You raised him well, but then you seem to be saying in your letter that you needed the coach to defend your boy and that you couldn't do it yourself.

Talk to the right-wingers. Look them in the eye. Your son is doing the patriotic thing. We need peaceful police at home and we must stop fighting racist wars abroad. Express yourself! That is how we show respect for our country!

When I took the knee with the Stop Shopping Choir at Trump Tower's front door, we witnessed the guards — with body armor, machine guns and dogs — step to the side and let us face the building directly. We thanked them after our ritual, because they respected that we were Americans expressing ourselves, as guaranteed in the Bill of Rights. This is the right that my father, now in his 90s, fought for when he put himself in harm's way in WWII. And in 2017, we are strengthening our rights every time that we use them to speak up or take the knee.

— REV. BILLY

GOT A QUESTION FOR REVEREND BILLY?
REVBILLY@INDYPENDENT.ORG.



Extreme Cities
The Peril and Promise of Urban Life
in the Age of Climate Change
by Ashley Dawson

"A ground-breaking investigation of the vulnerability of our cities in an age of climate chaos. ." —Bill McKibben, author and founder of 350.org

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PROOF IN THE AGE OF DOUBT

'Proof: Francisco Goya, Sergei Eisenstein, Robert Longo'

BROOKLYN MUSEUM | BROOKLYNMUSEUM.ORG
THROUGH JAN. 7

By Mike Newton

After the 2016 presidential election, I was one of many who spontaneously posted an all-black image to social media. In the immediate aftermath of Trump's victory, there was a need to express something along with the sense that nothing could express that mix of fear, frustration and grief that hit last Nov. 9. An all-black image — with its deathly/funereal associations — was all that fit.

Brooklyn-based artist Robert Longo (born 1953) may have been acting on similar impulses when he made "Untitled (Obama Leaving)" (2017). The piece, like most of his work, is a large-scale charcoal drawing. One of its paired panels shows Barack Obama and his entourage walking off an airport tarmac, the ex-President's facial expression the combination of hope and resignation that he so often wore. The second panel, though, is pure darkness — the whole sheet of paper covered with charcoal dust. The juxtaposition suggests a slight movement through time, like a comic-book page or film stills: from a grim but palpable present to some unimaginable future.

This work is part of "Proof," currently on view at the Brooklyn Museum, which puts Longo's work alongside that of Sergei Eisenstein and Francisco Goya. The Brooklyn Museum has lately presented a streak of progressive-minded, socially conscious exhibitions. This show is part of that, but it comes to its politics in a stranger, more elliptical way. Rather than trying to rally viewers around any particular cause, it asks them to question the nature of "proof" — the ways reality is mediated, codified, distorted and dramatized. Dramatized, especially: The art is almost all striking, severe imagery, delivering its various looming horrors in stark black and white.

The show begins with Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948), the gifted Russian filmmaker who defined the powers of cinematic montage, while also chronicling Soviet history in films like *Battle-ship Potemkin* (1925) and *October (Ten Days that Shook the World)* (1927-28). Seven of his films are displayed simultaneously, with no sound or titles, and slowed to a crawl: What's left are his cinematographic images which, frame by

frame, convey a wondrously melodramatic sort of old-fashioned pathos.

Next is Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes (1746-1828), one of the pre-eminent Spanish painters of his day, who has filtered into the modern era mainly through his etchings — small works, often made in private that feel centuries ahead of their time. His series *The Disasters of War* (1810-1820) — with grotesque impressions of Spain's early-19th-century war against Napoleon's armies — and similar series like *The Art of Bullfighting* (1815-1816) and *The Proverbs* (1815-1823), show human figures confronting strange stripes of monstrously inhuman power. Almost 200 years later, these works remain haunting and — very oddly — comforting, a rare mix due to their combined sense of somber defeatism and dark, relatable humor.

Longo's imposing works on paper are sourced from photographs, often ones found on the internet. Some feel a little frustrating, such as drawings based on headline news that seem to rely on those often-tragic, real-world associations for much of their emotional resonance. For example, the show includes images of massed riot police in St. Louis, an atomic-bomb test blast, and the *Charlie Hebdo* magazine offices, among other things. But there's really no denying the raw power (not to mention the careful craftsmanship) of Longo's work. Charcoal is a supple drawing medium with a unique sense of physical heft, and by rendering newsy photos in such poignant and weighty forms, Longo creates an epic encounter with the concerns of the day.

Longo's art starts with photos, but he augments and edits to heighten the mood before re-rendering them in charcoal. The exhibition shows how, in creating *Untitled (Raft at Sea)* (2016-2017), he added waves to an image of refugees floating in the middle of a rough ocean; an already harrowing image made even more so. It's here, in this kind of conscious amending of reality, that the exhibition's concerns with "proof" really come in. The point here isn't just that some objective reality exists — of course it does, and the internet makes it easy to find all the studies, photographs, and raw data you could want. And yet, the internet has also amplified the ability of individuals to mold their own realities, shaped through ideology and partisanship.

Donald Trump seems to believe that he should have the power to recast his-

tory itself in terms of his winner-take-all mentality, worldview of evil scapegoats and endless, self-congratulatory lies. (A disconcertingly large number of Americans seem to happily agree.) Like other authoritarians, he wants to redefine reality, but he doesn't want anyone to seek out contrasting or contradicting truths — he doesn't want anyone else to believe that reality can be redefined.

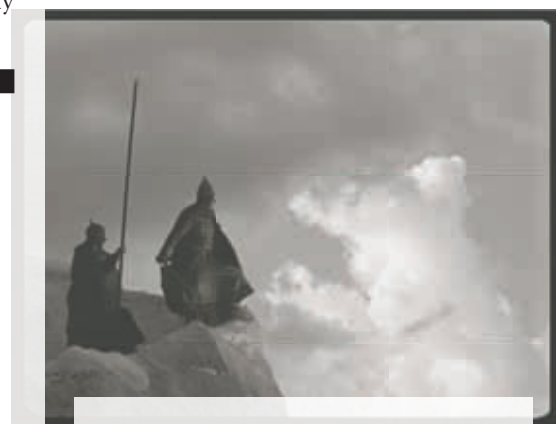
Representation — whether a newspaper article, a political speech or a work of art — is never neutral. The works in this show create potent records of the times in which they were produced, while remaining the clear result of personal and artistic mediation. All three artists are concerned with human subjects confronting the big things that threaten them, with these subjects often retaining some vestige of heroism even in failure. Perhaps the most optimistic work in the show is Longo's *Untitled (Black Pussy Hat in Women's March)* (2017), which shows an anonymous woman at the massive anti-Trump protest early this year, gazing forward into cascading New York City daylight. Is this the most objective, most accurate record of that day? No, of course not, but there's just no way around it: It has power.



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JONATHAN DORADO, BROOKLYN MUSEUM



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Robert Longo. *Untitled (Black Pussy Hat in Women's March)*, 2017. Charcoal on mounted paper.

Francisco de Goya y Lucientes. *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters (El sueño de la razón produce monstruos)*, plate 43 from *The Caprices (Los Caprichos)*, 1797-98. Etching and aquatint on laid paper.

Still from Sergei Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky*, 1938.

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